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**THE TWO TESTS**  
**THE SUPERNATURAL CLAIMS OF**  
**CHRISTIANITY**  
**TRIED BY TWO OF ITS OWN RULES**

**By Lionel Lisle**

**"The axe is laid unto the root of the tree."**

**1877**

**WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,**

**14 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON**

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## TO THE READER.

"The following treatise was not originally written for publication; but as it faithfully represents the process by which the minds of some, brought up in reverence and affection for the Christian faith, were relieved from the vague state of doubt that resulted on their cherished beliefs being overthrown or shaken by the course of modern thought, it has been suggested that it may, perhaps, be useful to others in the same position. Although their hold on the reason and intellect may have been lost or weakened, still the supernatural authority, the hopes, and the terrors of the gospel continue to cling to the heart and conscience, until they are effectually dislodged by considerations of mightier mastery over the heart and conscience. 'The strong man armed keepeth his palace' until the stronger appears. Then the whole faculties, mental and moral, are set free, and brought into accord in the cause of Truth."—Preface to the First Issue.

Some of the *principles* of inquiry into the truth or falsehood of the Christian evidences laid down by the ablest divines of the last generation are wholly admirable in themselves, viewed apart from the *application* of them by these divines. Dr. Chalmers, for instance, whose single-mindedness in devotion to truth and right was on a level with his mighty intellect and strong and clear perceptions, held: "There is a class of men who may feel disposed to overrate its evidences, because they are anxious to give every support and stability to a system which they conceive to be most intimately connected with the dearest hopes and wishes of humanity; because their imagination is carried away by the sublimity of its doctrines, or their heart engaged by that amiable morality which is so much calculated to improve and adorn the face of society. Now, we are ready to admit, that as the object of the inquiry is not the character but the truth of Christianity, the philosopher should be careful to protect his mind from the delusion of its charms. He should separate the exercises of the understanding from the tendencies of the fancy or of the heart. He should be prepared to follow the light of evidence, though it may lead him to conclusions the most painful and melancholy. He should train his mind to all the hardihood of abstract and unfeeling intelligence. He should give up everything to the supremacy of argument, and be able to renounce, without a sigh, all the tenderest prepossessions of infancy, the moment that truth demands of him the sacrifice." Dr. Chalmers would evidently see no beauty in moral precepts apart from the truth of the testimony to the authority on which they rest.

Again he wrote: "With them" (his own class of Christians) "the argument is adduced to a narrower compass. Is the testimony of the apostles and first Christians sufficient to establish the credibility of the facts which are recorded in the New Testament? The question is made to rest exclusively on the character of this testimony, and the circumstances attending it, and no antecedent theory of their own is suffered to mingle with the investigation. If the historical evidence of Christianity is found to be conclusive they conceive the investigation to be at an end, and that nothing remains on their part but an act of unconditional submission to all its doctrines.... We profess ourselves to belong to the latter description of Christians. We hold by the insufficiency of Nature to pronounce upon the intrinsic merits of any revelation, and think that the authority of every revelation rests mainly upon its historical and experimental evidences, and upon such marks of honesty in the composition itself as would apply to any human performance." And in another portion of the same work: "We are not competent to judge of the conduct of the Almighty in given circumstances. Here we are precluded by the nature of the subject from the benefit of observation. There is no antecedent experience to guide or to enlighten us. It is not for man to assume what is right or proper or natural for the Almighty to do. It is not in the mere spirit of piety that we say so: it is in the spirit of the soundest experimental philosophy." Elsewhere he prefers the atheist, or what would now be called the agnostic, to the deist, who, rejecting revelation, professes belief in a God fashioned according to the constitution of his own mind.

The question may, with clearness perhaps, be thus stated: Religion, in its true and highest sense, is the endeavour of man to place himself in a right position to the Power and to the laws of the Universe. If that Power has spoken audibly to man, in man's language, and revealed what that right position is, we must take the message as it has been given, and implicitly submit to and be guided by it. Dr. Chalmers, on the soundest truth-seeking principles, but, as I venture to think, with imperfect knowledge, and contrary to what his conclusions would have been had he lived now, decided that there was evidence that the Power of the Universe had spoken audibly to man, by a special messenger from on high—the very Son of God. The effect, therefore, on him was, as he states, "unconditional submission." But if the Power of the Universe has not spoken audibly to man, in man's language, then, on the same principles, there is no other position towards that Power, possible to man, than simply one of Agnosticism. *What* that Power is no one can tell. The theological method—that of authority resting on revelation and supernatural power—is gone; but the laws of the Universe remain,—the laws of God, whatever God may be. Man's knowledge of and right position towards these laws will then depend solely on political, social, and scientific methods of research. In this case the truly religious man will be he who rejects authority and theological methods and doctrine, and follows with "unconditional submission" the teachings of the widest experience.

In marked, and in my view unfavourable, contrast with the principles of Dr. Chalmers, the recent address of Dean Stanley to the students of St. Andrews urges: "There is a well-known saying of St. Augustine, in one of his happiest moods, which expressed this sense of proportion long ago: '*We believe the miracles for the sake of the Gospels, not the Gospels for the sake of the miracles*' Fill your minds with this saying, view it in all its consequences, observe how many maxims both of the Bible and of philosophy conform to it, and you will find yourselves in a position which will enable you to treat with equanimity half the perplexities of this subject." Here "equanimity," quite apart from their truth or falsehood, is commended towards marvels, *vouched as eye-witnessed facts*, for the sake of the Gospels. (See my remarks, pp. 86, 87, par. commencing Paul 1.)

Another instance, in a quite different profession, of a mind guided by a principle similar to that of Dr. Chalmers is presented by the illustrious philosopher, Mr. Faraday. One of a small body of Christians knit together in bands of love and peace, and himself the very embodiment of that high morality and love of kind, so much preached about however practised, no question appears to have crossed his mind as to the validity of the evidences on which the gospel claims rest; but, hating pretence and ever loyal to truth, he saw, with habitual clearness of judgment, that a revelation, dealing with what man cannot himself discover, must be taken, if true, implicitly as delivered. In his lecture on Mental Education before Prince Albert, in the year 1854, he said: "High as man is placed above the creatures around him, there is a higher and far more exalted position within his view; and the ways are infinite in which he occupies his thoughts about the fears, or hopes, or expectations of a future life. I believe that the truth of that future cannot be brought to his knowledge by any exertion of his mental powers, however exalted they may be; that it is made known to him by other teaching than his own, and is received through simple belief of the testimony given. Let no one suppose for a moment that the self-education I am about to commend in respect of the things of this life, extends to any considerations of the hope set before us, as if man by reasoning could find out God. It would be improper here to enter into this subject further than to claim an absolute distinction between religious and ordinary belief. I shall be reproached with the weakness of refusing to apply those mental operations, which I think good in respect of high things, to the very highest. I am content to bear the reproach. Yet, even in earthly matters, I believe that the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead; and I have never seen anything incompatible between those things of man which can be known by the spirit of man which is within him, and those higher things concerning his future which he cannot know by that spirit."

So that of himself, apart from revelation, Mr. Faraday's position was agnostic. Had he seen reason to reject revelation he would not have been a deist, any more than

Dr. Chalmers. There is an Eternal Power, but *what it is* man cannot divine. Of God or of a future state man himself can tell nothing. And the reproach from the votaries of most popular religions, which Mr. Faraday refers to, will apply equally to the agnostic who submits to revelation with his "simple belief," and to the agnostic who sees reason to reject it. Nothing would have been more utterly abhorrent to Mr. Faraday than to have his name paraded and referred to, as a Christian, in the sense in which it is alluded to in such books as the *Unseen Universe*, or, since his death, by many of the clergy in their sermons.

Any communications, from those interested in the subject of this treatise, addressed to me, care of the Publishers, will be gladly received and attended to.

L. L.

1st July, 1877.

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## INTRODUCTION.

1. The belief, concerning the position of mankind in this world and the next, held by the various Christians, who cling to the Old and New Testaments as the one inspired and infallible revelation of the mind and purpose of an Almighty, may be briefly summed up thus:—That the whole human race, because of the disobedience of Adam, is fallen from its original righteousness, and is under condemnation for transgression of the law or will of God; whether as Jews, to whom the law was given in certain forms of words or as Gentiles, who have the law, the knowledge of right and wrong, written on their consciences: that the eternal justice of God requires the eternal punishment of sin: that thus no escape being possible from the consequences of guilt, the result of Adam's disobedience and their own depravity, the whole human race must have perished, had it not been that God in love, and in order that he might place himself in a position to pardon sin in a way that would be consistent with eternal justice, sent his Son—the sole-begotten—into the world, who became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth: that Jesus fulfilled the will of God in his life: that his death by crucifixion has been accounted by God a full atonement for the sins of all who believe on him and his fulfilment of the law as if it had been their fulfilment: that by his atonement and righteousness they are thus restored to the divine favour: that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day: that he ascended into heaven: that he is now there waiting until all who are ordained unto eternal life shall, in course of time, be born, when he will return to earth in the glory and power of heaven: that then those who have believed in him will be raised from the dead, or, if not dead, will receive an incorruptible body and a purified mind: that the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, shall then be inaugurated: that risen mankind, who have believed on Jesus, will thenceforth enjoy eternal bliss in direct communion with God: that those of mankind who have not believed in Jesus will also be raised from the dead, but, their sins being unatoned for, they will be punished with everlasting banishment from the presence of God: that the doom in each case will be irrevocable, everlasting.

2. The conception of the Almighty, in relation to fallen man, formed in the minds of many believers, is that of a king dealing with rebel subjects who are equally guilty, and whose lives are equally forfeit. He shows mercy to whom he will—those who are thus favoured having no right to this grace; and whom he will he leaves to deserved death—those thus left having no right to complain of the pardon of the others, as their own doom would have been the same whether the others were spared or not.

Other believers, again, rather conceive the Almighty to be in the position of a gracious benefactor, offering

pardon through the merits of Jesus to any one who chooses to accept of it, the pardon not to take effect unless the sinner accepts it by acquiescing in the divine plan of salvation. And among the numerous sects into which believers are divided through opposing interpretations of various passages of the Bible, other conceptions of the Almighty and modifications of the foregoing statement of belief will be found. But all, or almost all, agree in dividing mankind into the believing and the unbelieving, the elect and the non-elect, the sheep and the goats, the saved and the lost.

Many Christians maintain that the atonement was universal; but it is doubtful if any maintain that the salvation will be universal, as belief is held to be a necessary condition or a sign of salvation.

Beyond such ideas as these there are two momentous considerations:—(1.) Whether an Almighty Maker of the universe could be such an one as, were he to carry out a scheme of salvation for a condemned race of his creatures, would do so in a way to have but a partial effect, or to be dependent on the belief or unbelief of those for whom it was devised. (2.) Whether vicarious sacrifice can in any way satisfy justice, divine or human. For what is vicarious sacrifice?—the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, whether an innocent lamb or an innocent child, or the innocent Son of the Eternal made flesh. However exalted the victim the principle is the same,—that of satisfying justice by committing so gross an injustice as enjoining or permitting the innocent to take the place of the guilty. Would any earthly tribunal be accounted righteous which allowed a self-sacrificing mother to substitute herself for a son, a son for a father? And does not the Christian doctrine represent its deity as the author of a proceeding so utterly unjust?

3. Christian believers, however, consider themselves as, or as having been, sinners under divine condemnation, but maintain that God can, consistently with justice, on account of the merits and death of Jesus, freely pardon their sin; and, in the hope that saving faith has been given them, they rest content in this belief, seek to live in this world in subjection to Christ's commandments, and await, after death, an entrance into bliss unspeakable, and, on Christ's Second coming, a joyful resurrection. Such, at least, is the profession; the practice does not always correspond. Christians are not unknown to history, nor possibly to the present age, whose conduct is widely at variance with their profession. But this is true of others besides believers in Christianity. They who rest content in the belief and hope just mentioned, are seldom disturbed by misgivings as to the soundness of the foundations of the Christian faith. They have no more doubt that the miraculous birth, the miracles, and the resurrection of Jesus were actual witnessed events, than they have of the assassination of Julius Caesar, or of the landing of William the Conqueror in England. And this belief seems to them to account for much. That stumbling-block to many in the way of owning that a wise and beneficent deity could be the author of such a world as this, of "a whole creation groaning and travailing in pain," disappears, in their minds, in view of the curse of God against sin, under which the earth and all it contains is, as they believe, labouring, and of the love of God in providing a way by which he could be just and yet pardon sin. It gives them, moreover, a definite, settling belief, and a hope for the future, that there is something better and different in store than life in this world. Regarding the earth and all upon it as under a curse, they profess to set their hearts on their home in heaven, on the glorious future revealed. Alas, then, if the grounds on which the prospect of this glorious future rests are worthless; if the hope is delusive; if its evil effect is, and has continually been, to divert men from applying themselves strenuously to make the best of this earth on which they live, and from heartily co-operating with their fellows to do the same; to build up brazen barriers of spiritual pride and self-complacency that sunder man from man; to foster vain-glory, strife, acrimony, and intolerance through pretence, as between opposing sects and schools, of a superior, or a more accurate, or a better defined knowledge of the mind of God.

4. The foundations of the Christian faith are the supernatural testimonies, as recorded in the New Testament, given from on high to the supernatural attributes claimed for Jesus. Many there are who profess, or by their mode of teaching imply, disbelief in these supernatural testimonies or attributes, or ignore them altogether, yet who for the sake of their position, clerical or otherwise, or to be in unison with prevailing fashion, extol Christianity as a system of high moral government and elevating tendency. All such, however, will appear to the honest and truth-loving mind but deserving of unmeasured scorn. Excepting the Jesus of the New Testament, is there any other Jesus? If the supernatural attributes there claimed for him are a pretence, he was either self-deluded or he was an impostor, or the compilers of the four gospels have borne false witness, or are recorders of inflated hearsay, or the inventors of fiction, all the while asserting that they were eye-witnesses, or narrators of the testimony of eye-witnesses. And what is to be said of a system founded either on self-delusion or imposition? Are not noble and pure doctrines put to the basest use when they are made supports of pretence and falsehood, and should they not be rescued from such contamination? Besides, Jesus scarcely claims to be the originator of new laws. His claim is far more. He is held to be the same person who gave the commandments to Moses on Sinai; and his spiritual application and extension of these laws are to be found also in the books of the Psalms and the Prophets, alleged to have been written under his own inspiration. Whether or not they are to be found elsewhere, in so-called heathen writings, is a consideration beyond the scope of this inquiry. The exhortation "to take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth," might probably be found taught and practised under other than Christian sanction,—might perhaps be discovered not to have been the guiding principle of all Christian professors. As a system, then, of moral government, or of high spiritual life, the Christianity of the New Testament professes no more than to confirm and verify, explain, fulfil, and develop the Jewish Scriptures. But its supernatural claims on behalf of Christ himself, by which it pretends to lay bare the truth as to the position of mankind in this world and the next, and to give them the hope of a new life beyond the grave, rest on the supernatural occurrences recorded. If these are true, Jesus is all he claimed to be. He is now alive, he has the destinies of the whole human race in his hands, and is to be worshipped as God. If they are not true, he was either a mere man, deluding or self-deluded, or the history of his life is a myth, however originated or developed. Truth and sincerity demand that there be no compromise between these two positions. The time has surely gone by when sound morality and brotherly kindness require the support of supernatural pretence; when religion, in the words of an ancient writer, is to be praised as an imposture devised by wise men for restraining the evil passions of the multitude. Let every true man repudiate the libel on his race implied by the most unworthy, most pernicious and despairing idea, which has for so long influenced human thought, that for the support of high morality and love of kind it is necessary to

disregard or to trifle with the highest of all morality—Truth.

5. Ordinary scientific research is of little avail here. Science of itself is unable either to affirm or to deny if any power beyond and supreme over Nature exists. Whether Nature works spontaneously, and there is nothing besides matter and its inherent organising powers; or whether her various operations are carried on in fixed modes, and by determinate forces, created and sustained by an Omnipotent and Omniscient Being, the observation of cause and effect, and the induction of general laws from ascertained facts is the same. But in the latter case, the Almighty One, if he willed, might suspend or break through, or alter the regular course of Nature's working; and the question here is, whether there is any valid evidence to show that the manifestations, as recorded in the New Testament, of a nature-controlling power actually happened. If such an one, almighty, all-seeing, all-knowing, all-just, all-loving, all-merciful (such as Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7) exists, a special revelation from him to men, different from his working in the visible universe, is not a thing impossible: moreover, assuming the Christian doctrine to be true, that by sending his son Jesus into the world he meant to save only a portion of the human race, the revelation might take place in a mode suited to the knowledge and capacities of those for whom it was intended; and merely because the mode may appear absurd and unworthy of a deity (though this consideration may not be lost sight of), or because it did not take place in the way which the learned and philosophers—hitherto a small minority of mankind—might have selected, it is not to be disbelieved if the evidence is good. And it may fairly be argued that there would be no simpler way by which an Almighty could reveal his own existence, or attest the divine mission of his chosen messenger, than by instances of nature-controlling power. Again and again, then, this one consideration presses, "Is there any good evidence to show that these occurrences did really happen, that this man Jesus, claiming to be the Son of God, received certain credentials from a Power beyond and supreme over Nature?"

6. The supernatural attributes of Jesus, claimed by himself, or by his disciples for him, and held to constitute saving faith, are—

- a. That he was alive from all eternity, the sole-begotten Son of God, before he appeared in this world.
- b. That his birth was the result of the "overshadowing" of his virgin-mother by the "power of the Highest."
- c. That while he sojourned on earth he was a union of God and man, a mortal human body with the mind and power of the Eternal.
- d. That his career on earth and its results were the fulfilment of the Jewish law and prophets.
- e. That he rose from the dead on the third day from his crucifixion, ascended from earth to heaven, and is now there, ever-living God and man united, with all power in heaven and in earth.
- f. That he is to return in the power of the Almighty to raise the dead, and to inaugurate with his chosen an everlasting kingdom, and to banish his enemies for ever from his presence.

The supernatural events recorded in the gospels as testimonies to these supernatural attributes are—

(1.) Those connected with his birth, viz.:—The appearance of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias to announce the birth of the forerunner John, and to Mary to announce her conception of Jesus; the three appearances of the angel of the Lord to Joseph in dreams; the visit of the wise men of the East; and the appearance of the angels and of the heavenly host to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem. (2.) The heavenly testimonies, viz.:—The voice at the baptism. The transfiguration and the voice thereat. The voice from heaven (John xii. 28-31). To which may be added—

The testimony of the devils.

The temptation by Satan, and the subsequent ministrations of angels. The earthquake and rending of the veil of the temple at the crucifixion. (3.) The miracles performed, which, if true, proved that Jesus and the first apostles had power over diseases and the course of nature.

(4.) The fulfilment of prophecy.

(5.) The resurrection from the dead, the appearances after that event, the ascension to heaven, the gifts of the apostles, and the subsequent manifestations to Paul on his way to Damascus.

7. For the purposes of this inquiry there are two simple, and what appear to be conclusive, tests ready to hand; one, a rule of evidence held sacred by Jews and Christians alike, and the other arising out of the nature of the claims made for Jesus.

(a.) Moses, or, as Christians affirm, the deity speaking by Moses, has laid down this rule of evidence in cases of guilt: "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses shall the matter be established." This rule is commended in the New Testament in the case of offences (Matt. xviii. 16). What then can be more fair to Christianity than to examine its claims by a rule of evidence held righteous by itself? For, to put it on the very lowest grounds, the evidence necessary to establish events otherwise incredible must surely be at least equally conclusive with that necessary to convict a criminal. These are not ordinary historical statements, to be credited or not as reasonable probability, fair conjecture, or prejudice may determine, without any penal consequences—whatever, either in this world or the world to come. If a man disbelieves that King Arthur, or Romulus, or even Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar ever existed, does it affect his welfare now or hereafter? But the gospels set forth extraordinary occurrences, disbelief of which by any one is said to render him liable to be left to perish in his sins, to endure the torments of hell evermore; and will it for a moment be asserted that a deity would expect belief involving so dire a consequence, on evidence he is said to consider insufficient for the punishment of common guilt? If, then, judged by this Mosaic rule of evidence, disbelief of the alleged supernatural testimonies to the claims of Jesus should be the righteous, and belief the unrighteous result, on whose side would a God of truth be? Would he be on the side of those who are swayed by emotion and not evidence—who imagine that their feelings are in unison with facts they have taken no pains to verify—who profess to believe because it is fashionable, or because they have been so taught from youth—who credit statements which they assert affect their relation to the Almighty and their eternal interests, on grounds on which they would not credit statements affecting their most trifling temporal interest? Would a God of truth be on their side? Surely not.

(b.) The New Testament record and doctrine are said to be a development and fulfilment of the Old. The

deity of the one is the deity of the other, under a different dispensation. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." If, then, the New Testament is shown conclusively to be a development and fulfilment of the Old, this claim will be sustained. If, on the other hand, there are twisted and untenable interpretations of Old Testament texts, to make them fit in with New Testament facts; or if there are practices or doctrines or aught else upheld in the New Testament, as of God, which are hateful or foreign to the deity of the Old, such would argue deception (whether intentional or not) in the writers of the New Testament, and show that, if the deity of the Old Testament is the true God, the deity of the New is not. Christianity thus maintaining that the God of the Jewish Scriptures is the Eternal, would fall by its own supports.

8. Christian authorities, for the most part, hold that the books of the Old Testament were composed by the different writers from Moses to Malachi, during the 1100 years from B.C. 1490 to B.C. 390, and the books of the New Testament, during the first century, a.d., by the companions of Jesus, or by those who received their information from his companions. Much learning and critical research have been expended on the one hand in maintaining this position, and on the other hand in impugning it, by stigmatising the whole of some books, and portions of others, as interpolations or compositions of later times. Into so nice a question as this, it is not proposed to enter here. A conscience-satisfying belief for earnest men can in no wise rest on the doubtful and disputed conclusions and arguments of verbal critics. The object of this inquiry, then, is to consider the evidence of the alleged supernatural credentials to the claims of Jesus, so far as possible in the most favourable light in which they can be presented, and therefore it will be assumed that the books of the Old and New Testaments were written at the time generally understood, and by the persons whose names they bear; and as by most believers in Christianity these books are held to be the one infallible authority, the endeavour will be not to travel beyond them. The alleged fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy by New Testament events will be fully considered under its own head; and on the divine inspiration claimed for the writers of the New Testament narratives, one word will suffice. To relate facts seen, or facts told to the narrator by others, requires no inspiration. If any one holds that the gospels record, either in whole or in part, facts which the writers did not see, or were not told of, but which were specially revealed to their spirit by a God of truth, as having occurred, he claims more for them than they do for themselves. See Luke i. 1-4; xxiv. 48; John i. 14; xx. 30, 31; xxi. 24, 25; Acts i. 1, 3; 1 Cor. xv. 1-9; 2 Peter i. 16-18; 1 John i. 1-3. The burden of these passages is summed up in the last one—"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." The truth or otherwise of the supernatural events recorded professes thus to rest on the testimony of human eyes and human ears, however divinely guided and enlightened.

9. Assuming, then, that the books of the New Testament were written by those whose names they bear, what is known of the narrators? Their character for honesty and trustworthiness among their neighbours and contemporaries there is no voucher for. Yet, while no one who knew them has left aught on record to their credit, there is nothing to the contrary. True, they themselves confess that neither the miraculous pretensions of Jesus himself, nor their own testimony with reference to the supernatural events of his life, met with any credit from by far the greater part of those living at the time, who had the means of satisfying themselves of their truth or falsehood—means which no one at the present day possesses. The people of Capernaum, consigned by Jesus to hell for unbelief, or his own brothers and sisters, may, for all that any one now can tell, have been as competent and truthful, in every respect, as the publican Matthew, or the fishermen Peter and John. The Roman governors, the Jewish high-priests, Gamaliel and the other rabbis, why are they to be accounted less trustworthy, less able to discern truth from pretence, than Paul and Luke? The following particulars, with reference to its writers, are to be gleaned from the New Testament:—

(1.) Matthew, whose name the first Gospel bears, was a tax-gatherer, sitting at the receipt of custom (Matt. ix. 9), in the thirty-first year of Jesus' life, when he became a follower of Jesus. Whether they knew each other previously is not mentioned. He was alive after the crucifixion, but no separate mention is made of him subsequent to Acts i. 13.

(2.) Mark, the writer of the second Gospel, is not mentioned before Acts xii. 12 (ordinary chronology, a.d. 43 to 47), and then it is as the son of one Mary, to whose house Peter went after his miraculous liberation from prison. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first mission to the Gentiles, but soon left them. A quarrel afterwards occurred between the two apostles on his account. Paul was hurt at the way in which he had turned back at the outset, and objected to take him on their second mission. Barnabas insisted that he should go. But if he is the same Mark mentioned in Colossians iv. 10, 2 Tim. iv. 11, and Philemon 24, a reconciliation with Paul had taken place, and he was alive and in Rome in a.d. 66. Again, Peter in his first epistle thus refers to him, "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus my son." It cannot be gathered from the New Testament that Mark (even if he had been the young man with the linen garment about his naked body [Mark xiv. 51, 52], as some fondly conjecture) knew anything of Jesus personally; but his own and his mother's connection with Peter is shown to have been an intimate one. From the passage in Philemon, also, it appears that he was at Rome, along with Luke, in attendance on Paul.

(3.) Of Luke, the writer of the third Gospel and of the Acts, the first mention is in Acts xvi. 10 (ordinary chronology, A.D. 53), where the "we" first appears in the narrative. Thereafter he was the almost constant companion of Paul in his journeys. He is also mentioned (2 Tim. iv. 11) as being alive in a.d. 66, in attendance on Paul in Rome. Although he claims (Luke i. 1-4) "a perfect understanding of all things from the very first," he places himself among those who received their information from the "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word;" so that he himself knew nothing of Jesus or of the events of his life. He opens his Gospel thus: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us." In his time, then, there were many different narratives of the life of Jesus. It is not clear whether Luke considered these erroneous, and requiring correction by the "perfect understanding" possessed by himself, or whether he was merely following the example of others in setting forth in order the events as he himself understood them.

(4.) John, whose name the fourth Gospel bears, and who is held to be the author also of three epistles and the Revelation, became a follower of Jesus in the thirty-first year of Jesus' life (Matt. iv. 18, 22; Mark i. 16-20;

Luke v. 1-11). He does not claim, nor is there any mention, that they were acquainted before, unless he was one of the two mentioned in John i. 37. He is said to have lived till a.d. 96. Jesus at the crucifixion (John xix. 25-27) left his mother Mary in charge of John, who had thus the very best opportunity of informing himself of all the circumstances within her knowledge.

(5.) Peter, if the first three Gospels are to be followed, became a follower of Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, at the same time as the apostle John, that is, after the imprisonment of John the Baptist (Matt. iv. 18-22; Mark i. 16-20; Luke v. 1-11). But in the fourth Gospel (John i. 40-42) both Jesus and Peter are mentioned together as following the preaching of John the Baptist. Peter is said to have died about a.d. 66.

(6.) Paul's first connection with Christianity was after his persecuting journey to Damascus (Acts ix.; ordinary chronology, a.d. 35), and it is believed that he suffered death at Rome, a.d. 68. With the exception of the miraculous appearance of Jesus while Paul was on the way to execute his persecuting mission at Damascus, and it may be the trance referred to in 2 Cor. xii. 1-4, it is not claimed for him that he possessed any knowledge of the events in the life of Jesus beyond what he learned from others.

Of the six writers in the New Testament, then, who record facts in connection with the life of Jesus, three—Matthew, John, and Peter—claim to have been his companions, and three—Mark, Luke, and Paul—with the exception just mentioned in the case of the last, received their information from others.

10. The foregoing considerations will serve to show that this inquiry into the evidence on which rest the supernatural credentials said to have been given to the claims of Jesus to the worship of mankind, will be proceeded with on the most favourable view possible for these claims—

(1.) By adopting what is held by Christians to be a divine and righteous rule of evidence,—“That at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”

(2.) By examining the claim of the New Testament to be a development and fulfilment of the Old.

(3.) By assuming that the books of the Old and New Testaments were written by those whose names they bear, and at the times generally believed by Christians.

(4.) By examining these books one with another, and travelling beyond them only so far as the strict requirements of the subject necessitate.

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## THE TWO TESTS.

### CHAPTER I. THE BIRTH OF JESUS, AND THE SUPERNATURAL EVENTS CONNECTED

#### THEREWITH

Luke i., ii.; Matt i., ii.

a. The appearances of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias and Mary. b. The appearances of the angel of the Lord to Joseph in dreams.

c. The visit of the wise men of the East.

d. The appearance of the angel and the heavenly host to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem.

FIRST TEST.—“In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”

Mark and John pass by the birth and upbringing of Jesus in silence. John, who knew Mary, and to whose care Mary was consigned by the expiring Jesus, would have been the most competent of all to record *her version* of the wondrous experiences of her cousin, herself, and her husband, in connection with the births of John the Baptist and of Jesus, yet he has not one word concerning them. Matthew, who may have known Mary and Joseph, has only meagre statements, very unlike what would be derived directly from either of the parents. But there is nothing to show from whom Matthew obtained his information. The detailed narration of the angelic appearances is made by Luke, who, so far as is known, was never at Jerusalem at all, far less ever came into contact with Mary. What, then, have we here?

*John*, the companion and best loved disciple of Jesus, the custodian of Mary, the most competent of all to narrate occurrences within her knowledge,—Silent.

*Mark*, the son of a woman known to Peter and the other companions of Jesus, and himself a companion of Peter, who would have been aware of these occurrences, if they had been believed among the very earliest Christian circle,—Silent.

*Matthew*, the companion of Jesus, who may have known Mary and Joseph,—Records three angel-visits to Joseph in dreams, and the visit of the wise men of the East, but is silent as to all the marvels of Luke.—Is silent as to Matthew's marvels, but sets forth, in detail, angel-visits to Zacharias and Mary, and the appearance to the shepherds at Bethlehem.

Luke, who narrates the testimony of others, and does not name his informants, merely stating that they were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, and who writes at least fifty years after the events referred to.

In the mouth of two, or in the mouth of three witnesses, nay, even in the mouth of one witness, is any one of

these incidents established?

'But let them be examined separately in detail:—

(a.) Luke states that while the Jewish priest Zacharias, in the order of his course, was burning incense in the temple, the angel of the Lord appeared, standing on the right side of the altar. The old priest was startled. The angel told him that his wife Elizabeth should bear a son, who should be great in the sight of the Lord, who should turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Zacharias had a misgiving that the event predicted could not well happen, as he himself was an old man, and his wife "well stricken in years." Whereupon the angel announced himself to be Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and forthwith he inflicted dumbness on Zacharias, to last until the child was born, as a punishment for his very reasonable doubt. Hark! the clanking clog of priestcraft the harsh ring of intolerance! Punishment because of reasonable doubt of a supernatural event not verified! Are the angels, then, on the side of the persecutors? Are they so sensitive of their "*ipse dixit?*" Thomas the disciple, it is mentioned, dis-believed in the risen Jesus, but Jesus appeared again to satisfy his doubts. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, laughed heartily when she heard the Lord announcing to her husband that she should bear a son when her child-bearing condition was past, and was kindly rebuked. Jesus in John, and the Lord in Genesis, had a tenderness to human doubt of a reasonable character; but Luke's peremptory angel was not for one moment to be gainsaid. Is this disposition angelic or earthly? Has such a temper of mind never been known among men? But to return to the narrative. Zacharias himself was the only one who saw the angel. Aged at the date of John's birth, neither he nor his wife could have been alive when Luke wrote. Who, then, came between Zacharias and Luke? Whose report has Luke credited? This is not a question of the credibility of Zacharias or the credibility of Luke, but of some unknown go-between, one or more. And can such unknown go-between be credited in view of the silence of John and Matthew; in view of the silence of Mark, the companion of Peter, who was (John i 41) a follower of John the Baptist? Surely the hesitating Zachariases, the doubting Thomases, and the mocking Sarahs of modern times are to be dealt with tenderly.

Luke goes on to narrate that, in the sixth month afterwards, the same angel Gabriel appeared to a virgin named Mary, betrothed to Joseph, a descendant of King David. The angel hailed her as the divinely favoured among women. She was very startled, wondering what he could mean by this style of address. He proceeded to tell her that she was to be the mother of a son, to be called the Son of the Highest, who was to reign for ever. She (naturally enough, were it not that she was about to be married) asked how that could be, in view of her virgin condition. More gracious to the hesitation of the timid maiden than to that of the aged priest, he replied, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." He then told her that her Cousin Elizabeth, hitherto barren, was in her sixth month, and asserted that with God "nothing shall be impossible." She made a sweetly-submissive speech in reply, and the angel went away. Here, again, is the same lack of connecting evidence. Mary alone saw the angel. Who were the go-betweens, the transmitters of the tale to Luke? Why the silence of Matthew, Mark, and John, especially John, Mary's custodian? Matthew mentions that Mary was found with child by the Holy Ghost; that this was revealed to Joseph in a dream; but he has not one word of the angel-visit to Mary. Moreover, in the next chapter, Luke relates a circumstance quite inconsistent with this angel-visit. The aged Simeon made some striking statements with reference to the destiny of the child, whom he met in the temple; and Luke adds, "Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him." But Simeon's statements were far less strong than the angel's. Can Mary, then, have forgotten the angel's visit? Did she not tell Joseph of it? Can she have forgotten her memorable visit to Cousin Elizabeth, when they congratulated each other on their respective conditions, and when even John the Baptist, before he saw the light, leaped for joy at Mary's salutation of his mother? If not, where was there room for marvel at Simeon's vaticination?

(6.) Matthew's account commences with Joseph's discovery of the condition of his betrothed. "Before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost," He does not mention how this discovery was made; if it was when Mary's condition could be no longer hid, or if Mary informed him as soon as she found herself pregnant, and then mentioned whatever grounds she had for asserting that this was the result of a supernatural "overshadowing." In any case, Matthew's account implies that at first Joseph doubted her, and thought that she had been unfaithful to him; but as he was a quiet man, averse to unnecessary scandal, he resolved to conceal her in some way. Yet, if Luke's angel-visit to Mary ever occurred, why was not Joseph informed of it at the time, for then there would have been no doubt on his mind that her conception was supernatural? Why was he not informed of the congratulatory visit to Cousin Elizabeth, of her speech and John the Baptist's joyous bound? Cousin Elizabeth, according to Luke, had no doubt that Mary was the "mother of my Lord." Joseph, her betrothed, according to Matthew, thought something quite different. While Joseph was considering the best mode of concealing Mary, the angel of the Lord appeared to him "in a dream," and directed him not to fear to take Mary to wife, for "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" And he obeyed; but he "knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born."

Luke's angel appeared to Zacharias and Mary in some visible shape, in broad day, or, at all events, when they were fully awake; but Matthew's angel made himself known to Joseph in dreams—why the difference!—the object being to induce Joseph to become the reputed father of a child *not his own*, and thus to conceal from the Jewish nation what is alleged to be the fulfilment of the prophecy that a "virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel," &c. Are mystery and misrepresentation, then, of divine authority? Are unbelieving Jews and Gentiles to be eternally reprobate for not allowing that a man was other than the son of his reputed parents? An Almighty maker of the universe is here represented as begetting a child by a virgin untouched by man, and so far from disposing that this should be done in a way that would be clearly verified and apparent, either to the world at large or to any select portion of it, he—eternal God—is said to have proceeded in the clandestine way of directing, by means of an angel who manifested himself in dreams, that Joseph should take this virgin to wife, and pass off the divine offspring as his own son, that thus the wondrous birth on which so much depended might be concealed.

Matthew further mentions two subsequent appearances of the angel of the Lord to Joseph in dreams, the first directing him to take the child to Egypt to be out of the way of Herod's massacre, and then, when Herod



was dead, directing him to return to Judea. Luke, on the other hand, practically ignores Joseph in the whole transaction of the birth of Jesus. He makes no mention of the way in which Mary informed her lover; of the condition she was in, and merely brings him in when the birth is about to take place, as proceeding from Nazareth to Bethlehem, along with Mary, to be taxed. While Matthew avers that he was desirous of saving Mary's good name, there is nothing in Luke to show that Joseph ever knew of Mary being with child before he married her; and for all that is there stated, he may have believed that Jesus was his own son; Luke's only later reference to Joseph in connection with Jesus, is in his account of the visit to the temple, when the boy was twelve years old. Discovering that he was not among the homeward-bound company, Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem, and found him in the temple posing the doctors, when his mother said, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." The reply was, "How is it ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and Luke adds, "They understood not the saying which he spake unto them." How, then, can the angel-visit to Mary be true, or the three angel-visits to the slumbering Joseph? For if these be not false, Joseph and Mary were the two human beings at the time who did understand fully who this wondrous child was.

(c and d.) The two further supernatural incidents in connection with the birth of Jesus (the wise men of the East and the appearance to the Bethlehem shepherds) remain to be considered. The details of the one are quite irreconcilable with those of the other.

(c) Matthew states that on the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, in the reign of King Herod, certain wise men from the East came to Jerusalem. They announced that the object of their visit was to worship the new-born King of the Jews, whose natal star they had seen in the East. On hearing this Herod was much troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Herod sent for the priests to inquire of them where Christ, the anointed one, was to be born. On the authority of the prophecy, Micah v. 2, they informed him that the Ruler of Israel was to come out of Bethlehem. Herod then had a private conference with the wise men, eagerly asked when the star appeared, charged them to proceed to Bethlehem and search for the child, and when they had found him to bring him word again that he himself might go and worship him. On leaving Herod, the very star they had seen in the East made its appearance again, and went: before them until it became stationary above the house where Jesus was. They entered the house, found Mary and her infant boy, fell down and worshipped him, and offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they went back by another route to their own country. After this, and again in a dream, Joseph was warned to take Jesus to Egypt, to avoid a massacre which Herod ordered, "when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men," of all the children in Bethlehem two years old and under, "according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." After Herod's death, Joseph was directed, in another dream, to return to Judea; but when he learned that Herod's son was reigning there he settled in Nazareth of Galilee.

Luke's account is that Joseph and Mary dwelt in Nazareth before the angel-visit to Mary; that he and Mary went up from there to Bethlehem to be taxed; that Jesus was born while they were at Bethlehem; that he was circumcised on the eighth day; that when Mary's purification—thirty-three days—was at an end they took the babe to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord in the temple; and that when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, "*to their own city Nazareth.*"

The glaring contradiction here between Luke and Matthew need scarce be dwelt on. Luke states that Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem from Nazareth: Matthew's account implies that they were not in Nazareth until the return from Egypt, and that going to Nazareth at all was because of a warning from God in a dream. Matthew states that they fled from Bethlehem to Egypt to avoid the wrath of Herod: Luke, that they brought the child to Jerusalem, where Herod, according to Matthew, was, and that he was openly acknowledged in the temple by Simeon and Anna. Matthew states that, at Herod's death, they went from Egypt to Nazareth, avoiding Judea; Luke, that they went straight from Jerusalem to Nazareth in a very short time after the birth of Jesus.

Matthew places the birth of Jesus in the reign of King Herod; Luke, during the taxing made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, which, following Josephus, was not till after the death of Archelaus, Herod's successor. This discrepancy has given much anxious concern to the "reconcilers" and critics, the latest solution being a conjecture, stated to rest "on good grounds," that Cyrenius was *twice* governor of Syria, first towards the close of Herod's life, afterwards on the death of Archelaus. For the present purpose, it is assumed that Matthew and Luke refer to the same period.

The tale of the wise men suggests many questions. What came of them afterwards? How many were there? Where did they come from? How, when they saw the star in the East, did they know that it indicated the birth of a King of the Jews? What special *Jewish* appearance did it present? and what end was their heaven-directed visit to serve? Not to proclaim Jesus to the Jews as their king and ruler; not to accredit them as witnesses to proclaim his divinity far and wide; not, so far as is stated, to bring their own minds to the saving belief that he was the Saviour of the world; not even to confirm Mary and Joseph's faith—for if the angel-visits are true that would have been unnecessary; but to offer to him, the professed Lord of heaven and earth, such trumpery gifts as were laid upon the altars of the old gods, or presented to baby princes of this world.

(d.) Luke narrates that, at the birth of Jesus, a company of shepherds—how many is not mentioned—were watching their flocks at night in the fields, when "lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men." The shepherds forthwith hastened to Bethlehem, and discovered Mary, Joseph, and the infant boy lying in a manger. Finding the vision they had seen thus exactly realised, they spread abroad, among their wondering countrymen, "the saying that was told them concerning this child." "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

The question here again arises: between the shepherds, the eye-witnesses of this event, and Luke, who

wrote at least fifty years after, who were the go-betweens? Or if the information came from Mary, why are Matthew, Mark, and, above all, John silent? And what became of the shepherds? When Jesus began his public ministry, where were they? Where those they informed? Joseph and Mary, by Luke's account, had come from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be taxed, and returned. Thus they would have been known in Bethlehem as belonging to Nazareth, and of the house and lineage of David. There would not then have been difficulty in keeping them in view. And would men who had seen so remarkable an appearance, to whom the angel of the Lord had spoken, who had heard the heavenly host singing, manifestations more glorious than before or since have been vouchsafed to any one, have lost sight of the wondrous child, or would those whom they informed have lost sight of him? Yet, during the three years' public appearance of Jesus, not one of them, so far as can be gathered, is to be found among his followers.

(e and d.) That the visit of the wise men of the East, and the appearance to the shepherds, can both be true, is impossible. Luke is very precise as to the length of the stay of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem after the birth of Jesus. It extended to the eighth day for circumcision, and to the thirty-third day after this for Mary's purification. Then they left Bethlehem for Jerusalem, there "performed all things according to the law of the Lord," and returned straight to Galilee. During the forty or forty-one days of the stay at Bethlehem—five miles from Jerusalem—the shepherds were spreading abroad "the saying that was told them concerning this child." That he was a "Saviour, born in the city of David, Christ the Lord." The visit of the wise men must have occurred in the course of these forty-one days. Their inquiry put all Jerusalem in a ferment, roused Herod's jealousy, set him inquiring where Christ should be born, induced the most eager desire to find the new-born babe, that he might remove such an obstacle from his path, *all the while that the shepherds in the neighboring district were publishing the glad tidings of his birth*. The wise men were guided by a star to the house where Joseph and Mary stayed, saw and worshipped the wondrous child, and were warned of God in a dream to depart to their own country privately; *but no such admonition to keep silence restrained the outspoken shepherds in the close vicinity of Herod*. To avoid Herod's wrath, Joseph "took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt," *just at the time "when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord," Herod being at Jerusalem, and having had his jealousy roused by the tale of the wise men*. Can aught more utterly irreconcilable be imagined? As, then, the falsehood of the accusers of Susanna in the Apocrypha was detected, when they were examined apart by Daniel, on the one affirming that her crime was committed "under a mastic tree" and the other "under a holm tree," so such contradiction as that between Matthew and Luke wholly destroys the credit of both narratives. What is there for a conscience-satisfying belief to rest upon?

SECOND TEST.—*The claim of the New Testament to represent the Jewish Jehovah.*

1.. The deity begetting a mortal child by a mortal woman, was this a Jewish or a Gentile idea? That it was not a Jewish idea will be shown when the alleged fulfilment of Isaiah vii. 14,—"Behold a virgin shall conceive" &c., is considered. That it was a common Gentile idea is most manifest. A glowing account of Jupiter's commerce with the fair ones of the earth is to be found in his amorous address to his sister-wife Juno (*Iliad*, Book xiv. 280-353). The other gods and goddesses in like manner bestowed their favours on mortals, and begat mortal children. Plato was said to be the child of a virgin by Apollo. Apollo appeared to her betrothed in a dream, and told him his bride was with child, on which he delayed his marriage. What is this but the tale of Mary and Joseph in another form? Which is the original? Plutarch also mentions that a similar notion was held by the Egyptians, but of male gods only. "The Egyptians, indeed, make a distinction in this case, which they think not an absurd one, that it is not impossible for a woman to be impregnated by the approach of some divine spirit, but that a man can have no corporeal intercourse with a goddess." This is an exactly similar notion to Luke's "overshadowing" of Mary. "Out of Egypt have I called my son," is perfectly true in a sense. Confucius also, in one of the sacred books of the Chinese, refers to the great Holy One, who would appear in the latter days, born of a virgin, whose name shall be the Prince of Peace.

Similar, too, are the legends of the fabled founders of some, to whom so many of the civil and religious institutions of the city were ascribed. Romulus and Remus were sons of the war-god Mars. Their mother Rhea took refuge in a cave: the meeting of the god and the mortal was attended by prodigies: the heaven was darkened, the sun eclipsed: her celestial lover announced to Rhea that she should bear twin-sons, to be renowned in arms, and then ascended in a cloud from the earth. Servius Tullius, also, had a like origin. His mother, a slave in the household of Tarquin, beheld a divine appearance on the hearth, and afterwards was "found with child" by the god. The child, when born, was named Servius, from his mother's condition. During its sleep she saw its head surrounded by flames, which were extinguished when she awakened it. The founder, likewise, of the Sabine town of Cures was a son of Mars. His mother, a virgin of noble family, seized with divine favour, while dancing in the temple, entered the shrine, and became pregnant by the god. Her son, she is told, would be of superhuman beauty, matchless in deeds of arms. So that a Roman on his conversion had merely to transfer to Jesus a like belief to those in which he had been nurtured with reverence to the births of the fabled founders and ancient kings of his own city, up to whom the political and religious practices which he had been taught to regard as sacred were traced. To him there would have been nothing incredible in the story of Mary's conception. The claim of the church *of Rome* to be the true church of Christ may thus, in a certain sense, be cordially acquiesced in.

2. The Son of God, by a mortal woman, brought up as the child of that woman and her husband,—Is that a proceeding proper to the deity of the Old Testament? The writings and the spirit of Moses and the prophets emphatically answer, No.

But it exactly corresponds with the Grecian legends of the "father of gods and men." The suffering hero Hercules, son of Jupiter and Alcmena, brought up by her and her husband Amphitryon, is a memorable pagan tale of a kindred character.

3. The birth of an illustrious personage made manifest by a star,—Is that consistent with the attributes of the Jewish Jehovah? The stars in the Old Testament are ever referred to as witnesses to the might of the Eternal, and those who sought to divine earthly events by their courses, conjunctions, or appearances, were treated with derision. "Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up and

save thee from these things that shall come upon thee." This is addressed by Isaiah, xlvi. 13, to the daughter of the Chaldeans, Babylon. Matthew's stargazing wise men would thus have been "spued out of the mouth" of the Jewish Jehovah.

## CHAPTER II. THE SUPERNATURAL TESTIMONIES DURING THE LIFETIME OF JESUS

(a.) The descent of the Holy Spirit, like a dove, and the voice from heaven, at his baptism. (b.) The transfiguration, and the voice then heard; also the voice from heaven, mentioned in John xii 28-31. (c.) The testimony of the devils. (d.) The forty days' fast, the temptation by Satan, and the subsequent ministration of angels. (e.) The earthquake and rending of the veil of the temple at the crucifixion.

(a.) *The occurrences at the baptism* (Matt. iii.; Mark i. 1-11; Luke iii. 21, 22; John i. 29-34).

FIRST TEST.—"*In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.*"

In the fourth gospel the account given is expressly stated to be the record of John the Baptist. It does not appear from whom the particulars in the other three gospels were derived.

With the exception of the angel-visit to Zacharias, at his birth, and the dove and voice at the baptism of Jesus, there is nothing supernatural in connection with John. He is represented as a plain-spoken, downright enthusiast, held in esteem by king and people, and as appropriating to himself the prophecy of Isaiah—"A voice of one crying in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord, making straight in the desert a highway for our God." He lived a rude life in the desert, practised fasting and purifying, and baptized his followers. By his outspokenness he incurred the enmity of Herodias, the wife of Herod, who obtained his head as a reward for the pleasure given to her husband by her daughter's dancing. In comparing then his record, as found in John, with the statements of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, one most marked divergence appears. The latter assert that, on Jesus coming to be baptized, the Baptist objected, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, comest thou to me:" thus implying a knowledge on John's part that Jesus was the Christ. Whereas the former pointedly states, on John's own authority that *he did not know* Jesus as the Messiah until the supernatural appearance of the dove occurred. "*I knew him not*, but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me," &c.. If the account in the fourth gospel then is true, Matthew's account on this point must be false, and the angel-appearance to Zacharias, and John's gladsome leap in his mother's womb on Mary's salutation of Elizabeth, are discredited. Cousin Elizabeth addressed Mary as "the mother of my Lord;" and had this been so, would not John have been brought up in the belief that Jesus was "the Lord," whose advent he was to prepare? Again, the "record" of John the Baptist in the fourth gospel does not confirm or corroborate the "voice from heaven, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," at the baptism, mentioned in the other gospels. John would surely have heard these wondrous words, and could not well have forgotten them.

SECOND TEST.—*The claim of the New Testament to represent the Jewish Jehovah.*

1. A point to be specially noticed is John's declaration, that he who sent him to baptize with water had charged him that the Messiah would be made manifest by the spirit of God descending from heaven like a dove, and alighting and remaining on him. John affirms that he bare record that Jesus was the Son of God, because in his case this condition was fulfilled. Now, who sent John to baptize with water? Is there anything in the Old Testament scriptures to give baptism with water place as an ordinance of the being therein upheld as divine, and whom both John the Baptist and Jesus claimed to represent? Not one word! Who, then, sent John to baptize with water? Did he receive his directions from angels in dreams or otherwise? Some of the lustrations in connection with the heathen temples were, however, very similar to the ordinance of baptism since practised among Christians.

2. The spirit of the Eternal in a bodily shape like a dove! is that an Old Testament prediction, an Old Testament belief? Let the following passages reply:—Isaiah xl. 25, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number," &c. Deut. iv. 15-17,—"Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air," &c. Here then, at the very outset, are John the Baptist and Jesus represented as connected with a marvellous event, utterly abhorrent to the Old Testament deity, whose will and purpose they claimed to be fulfilling!

But though the conception of the deity appearing in the shape of any bird or beast was wholly foreign to the Old Testament writers, it was one quite familiar to the heathen world. In the *Iliad*, for instance, the god Sleep, like the shrill bird of night, alighting, perched on the loftiest fir on Mount Ida, to aid the amorous design of Juno on mightiest Jove; Apollo and Pallas were seated on a lofty beech, like two vultures, to watch the duel between Ajax and Hector. The Egyptian deities had each their appropriate symbol-beast, bird, or reptile. A dove, as an emblem of meekness and peace, was no doubt deemed by the gospel compilers the most fitting of what they wished to convey as the mission of Jesus; but the conception being heathen, and not Jewish, it discredits the claim of Christianity, that the New Testament is a continuation and fulfilment of the Old.

(h) The transfiguration, &c. (Matt. xvii. 1-13; Mark ix, 243; Luke ix. 28-36). Jesus took Peter and James and John along with him into a high mountain apart to pray. While praying he was transfigured before them; his face shone as the sun; his raiment glistened; Moses and Elias appeared in glory talking with him, and spoke of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem; Peter and the others were heavy with sleep, but

when awake they saw his glory and the two that were with him; Peter, in bewilderment, suggested that three tabernacles be made, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elias; a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On this the disciples fell on their faces in fear, and when they revived they saw no one except Jesus himself. He charged them to conceal what they had seen until after his resurrection.

*John* makes no mention of the transfiguration; but in chapter xii 28-30, when Jesus is at Jerusalem "exhorting the people, and praying, Father, glorify thy name; then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people, there-tore, that stood by and heard it said that it thundered, others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes."

Peter, 2nd epistle i. 17,— "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard when we were with him in the holy mount."

The idea is an old one that because light of intense brilliancy dazzles the human eye it is therefore the dwelling-place and the raiment of the inhabitants of heaven, pictured thus as a refulgent abode with refulgent beings. "Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment" (Psalm civ. 2); "At length do thou come, we pray, with a cloud thy shining shoulders veiled, O Augur Apollo!" (Horace i. 2, 31,) are instances. Glory and dazzling light meant the same thing. Now, light is known to be one of the forms in which force manifests itself, convertible into the other force-forms, and the other force-forms, convertible into it. Still, the account of the transfiguration, if the evidence on which it rests were at all trustworthy, would be a very important credential to the supernatural pretensions of Jesus, under the claim that such special manifestations of a Power beyond and supreme over Nature were made so as best to suit the comprehension of those for whom they were intended, and as showing that Jesus could so command the force-forms of Nature as to irradiate his person at will. What, then, is the evidence? The persons who witnessed the occurrence were Peter, James, and John, and while it lasted they were in a state of bewilderment, and part of the time asleep. Jesus commanded them to conceal what they had seen until after his resurrection. Matthew, therefore, could not have heard of it at the time it happened, and he does not state from whom he received the particulars he narrates. Perhaps from the forward Peter, who, in his epistle quoted above, confirms the account. For, strange to say, John, the other eye-witness, has not one word in support of the supernatural appearance on the mount of transfiguration. Of three eyewitnesses there is only the testimony of one, Peter; and although John, one of the others, has written an account of the life of Jesus, he passes by this striking event in silence. So the evidence fails. Can it, then, have been a dream of Peter, when with Jesus, James, and John in some lonely mountain in Galilee?

But though John does not mention the marvellous transfiguration, and the voice from heaven then heard, he does narrate a somewhat similar occurrence, in broad day, at Jerusalem. But Matthew, who would have been present, does not confirm John's statement. What, then, is to be said? What faith can righteously rest on such testimony?

(c.) *The testimonies of the devils* (Matt. viii. 29; xxxi. 32; Mark i. 24; i. 34; iii 11, 12; v. 7; Luke iv. 34; iv. 41; viii. 28).

(1.) Devils, who came out of many, cried out that Jesus was Christ, the Son of God; but he rebuked them and suffered them not to speak, because they knew him. (2.) Some expressed fear of his power thus, "Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? to torment us before the time? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." (3.) The following remarkable event is recorded: A man with an unclean spirit, untamable, who had burst asunder his chains and fetters, and was always, night and day, in the mountains and among the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones, saw Jesus afar off, ran and worshipped him, exclaiming, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, the Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not." Jesus asked him, "What is thy name?" and he replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." Jesus cast out the legion, and, at their own request, gave them permission to enter a herd of two thousand swine feeding close by, with the result that they all ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and were choked. What became of the devils is not mentioned.

Paul (1 Cor. x. 20) states, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God," devils here being synonymous with the idols or gods of the Gentiles. In the following four passages in which devils are mentioned in the Old Testament (Lev. xvii. 7; Deut. xxxii. 17; 2 Chron. xi. 15; Psalm cvi. 37), the word is used in exactly the same sense as by Paul. "Devils," then, as indwelling unclean spirits, madly swaying their victims, or producing lunacy, blindness, dumbness, or other infirmities, are beings or influences quite unknown to the Old Testament writers. Moreover, in the Old Testament the heathen gods, though called devils, are derided as powerless. (See Elijah's mockery of Baal, and such passages as Psalm cxxxv. 15, 18.) In the fourth Gospel, too, there is scarcely any confirmation of the unclean spirits. The Jews, indeed, tell Jesus that he hath a devil, and is mad, showing a belief on their part of possession in some form; but John does not corroborate one single instance of the devil-manifestations and exorcisms so prominently set forth in the other Gospels. If, then, in Jesus' time there was a notion current among the Jews that madness and natural diseases and defects were manifestations of the so-called evil principle, or were evil spirits or influences, whence was this most erroneous doctrine derived? Certainly not from their own Old Testament writings. So far, therefore, the Old Testament discredits the accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke of the devils and their influences. It does not recognise beings or powers acting in the way described. And John's silence constitutes a fatal defect in the evidence in support of these manifestations.

In the Old Testament (in such passages as Lev. xix. 31; xx. 27; Deut. xviii. 9, 12; Isa. viii. 19) reference is made to wizards, witches, and familiar spirits. Although the more ignorant and idol-affecting Israelites, and the Godforsaken Saul were attracted by such pretences, it does not appear that Moses or the prophets believed that they were real powers. Isaiah viii. 19 implies the contrary. Moses calls them the "abominations of those nations" whom the Lord was to drive out of Palestine from before the children of Israel. The gift they assumed was blasphemy against Jehovah, usurpation of the prerogative of him who "alone doeth wondrous things;" and this being so, they were to be cut off from among his people. But the possession of a familiar

spirit with a gift of divination, or the power of witchcraft, or the evil spirit which put dissension between Abimelech and the Shechemites, or the evil spirit from the Lord manifested in Saul's jealousy of David, and occasionally succumbing to the charm of David's harp, or the lying spirit put by the Lord in the mouths of the prophets of Ahab, differ greatly from such evil spirits,—*personal, separate from their victims, entering in, and coming out of them*, as the "legion" mentioned above, or the demon-torn youth (Luke ix. 37, 42), or the devil that was dumb (Luke xi. 14).\*

*\* The Assyrians and Babylonians, however, among whom the captive Jews were afterwards placed, believed that the world teemed with malignant spirits, who were the authors of the various diseases to which mankind are subject. The Jews of the Talmud were imbued with the same idea.*

In the Apocryphal book of Tobit, also, the evil spirit Asmodeus, who killed the seven husbands of Raguel's daughter as they approached her, and who was at last driven forth by the smoke of the "ashes of the perfumes and of the heart and liver of a fish," so that he "fled into the utmost parts of Egypt, and the angel bound him," differs from the New Testament evil spirits in that he is represented rather as "attendant" on the maiden, than as "indwelling," but has this similarity to them that he is mentioned as a distinct person, exercising a malignant influence.

In a stela found at Thebes it is recorded that Barneses XII., while on his way through Mesopotamia to collect tribute, was so enraptured with the charms of a chieftain's daughter that he married her. Her father afterwards came to Thebes, to beg of the king the services of a physician to effect the cure of a younger daughter possessed by an evil spirit. The physician sent, like Jesus' disciples (Luke ix. 40), could not cast him out, and eleven years later the father went again to Thebes to sue the gods of Egypt for more effectual aid. The king then gave him the use of the ark of the god Chons, which on arriving in Mesopotamia, after a journey of eighteen months, immediately drove forth the evil spirit from out his victim. On this the Mesopotamian chieftain was unwilling to part with the ark; but after retaining it three years and nine months, being warned in a dream in which he saw the deity fly back to Egypt in the shape of a golden hawk, he returned the ark to Egypt, in the thirty-third year of Rameses.

The Zoroastrian conception of the prince of the "devils," Ahriman, and his attendant powers, reminds forcibly of the taunt of the Jews to Jesus, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." But how unlike this conception is to that of the impotent god of Ekron Beelzebub, referred to in 2 Kings i.

These instances abundantly suffice to show that the belief held by the Jews in the time of Jesus, as to possession by evil or unclean spirits, or demons, or devils, was a belief gathered from the nations among whom they were scattered after the first captivity, and that it would have been held by Moses as an "abomination of those nations." What, then, becomes of the testimony of the devils to the claim of Jesus? Moses and the prophets would have held it in derision.

(d.) *The temptation in the wilderness* (Matt. iv. 1-11; Mark i. 12, 13; Luke iv. 1, 13).

Jesus, after his baptism, was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. (1.) He fasted forty days and nights, and was then hungered, when the tempter came to him requiring that, if he were the son of God, he would turn the stones into bread. Jesus replied by a verse from Deuteronomy,—*"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* (2, Luke makes this 3.) Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and setting him on a pinnacle of the temple, said "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee and, in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Jesus again replied by a verse from Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (3, Luke makes this 2.) The devil then took him up to the summit of a very high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me," Jesus the third time, after a "Get thee hence Satan," replied by a verse from Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." On this the devil left him, and angels came and ministered to him.

The two persons here concerned were Jesus and Satan. The testimony of the latter illustrious personage is out of the question, partly because he is not famed as a truth-teller, partly because any intercourse between him and the writers of the New Testament is not to be thought of. If, then, Jesus gave the particulars to Matthew, why did the best-loved disciple John not know of them? The details of the earlier life of Jesus, prior to the Baptist's imprisonment, are more ample in his Gospel than in the others; but so far from there being any mention of the temptation, it would require much ingenuity to find a place for it in the series of events he relates.

The most admirable lesson, however, which the tale conveys, or which may be gathered from it, that neither for daily bread nor for vain-glory, nor for the sake of power and riches is truth in aught to be compromised or swerved from, may help to sustain those who go along with the present inquiry to persevere with it to the uttermost, whatever the consequences or whatever the conclusions it may lead to, think as they may of the forty days' fast, the wilderness and the wild beasts, Satan and the angels.

It will be proper here to contrast the conception of "Satan" in the New Testament with that in the Old.

The Satan of the temptation was a being capable of transporting Jesus from the wilderness to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, and again to a mountain summit, where, in a moment of time, he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, the disposal of whose dominion he arrogated to himself. Again—Matt. xii. 22, 30—Jesus refers to Satan as the king of a demon kingdom opposed to the kingdom of God; Mark iv. 15, as preventing the words of life from taking root in men's hearts; Luke x. 18, as one he himself had seen fall from heaven like lightning; Luke xiii. 16, as one who had bound a woman with infirmity eighteen years; Luke xxii. 31, as desirous to sift Simon Peter as wheat; Matt. xiii. 39, as the enemy who sowed the tares among the wheat; Matt. xxv. 41, as the being for whom and for whose angels everlasting fire has been prepared; John viii. 44, as the parent of the unbelieving Jews, a murderer, and the father of lies. In Luke xxii. 3, John xiii. 27, Satan is referred to as entering into Judas Iscariot to tempt him to betray Jesus.

In the apostolic writings he is mentioned—Acts v. 3—as filling the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Ghost;

Acts xxvi. 18, as a power over men's minds opposed to the power of God; 1 Tim. i. 20, and 1 Cor. v. 5, as one to whom backsliders were to be delivered over; 2 Cor. ii. 11, Eph. vi. 11, 1 Tim. iii. 7, as a wily adversary; 2 Cor. xi. 14, as transformed into an angel of light; 1 Thess. ii. 18, as thwarting Paul's intentions; 2 Thess. ii. 9, as one whose working is "with all power, and signs, and lying wonders;" 1 Tim. v. 15, as one to whom backsliders turn aside; 2 Tim. ii. 26, as an ensnarer of men; Heb. ii. 14, as "him that hath the power of death;" 1 Peter v. 8, as "your adversary the devil," who, "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour;" 1 John iii. 8, as "him who sinneth from the beginning;" Rev. ii. 9, 10, 13-24, iii. 9, as possessing a seat, a synagogue, and casting the true professors into prison; Rev. xii. 9, as "the great dragon who was cast out (from heaven), that old serpent called the devil and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him;" Rev. xii. 10, as "the constant accuser of the brethren;" Rev. xx. 2, as being bound a thousand years.

Of this mighty and malignant being, is there any trace in the Old Testament? Is the existence of such a person, such a power, continuously and successfully working against God, consonant with Old Testament belief? Isaiah (xlv. 5-7) boldly and decisively replies in the negative: "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.... I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." Who or what, then, is the Satan of the Old Testament?

The translation of the Authorised Version, as it renders the same Hebrew word "Satan" in one place and "adversary" in others, tends to mislead. But the following portions of Psalm cix. will show how the word was employed:—

Verse 6—"Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan (an adversary) stand at his right hand." Verse 20—"Let this be the reward of my adversaries (my Satans)." Verse 29—"Let mine adversaries (my Satans) be clothed with shame."

The Old Testament Satan, therefore, is *not a particular person at all, but a character which would apply to any one acting in opposition to another*. Let this view be tested by the following instances:—

Numbers xxii. 22—"And God's anger was kindled because he (Balaam) went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary (a Satan) against him." *Here the Satan is the angel of the Lord*. 2 Sam. xxiv. 1—"And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he provoked David to number Israel." 1 Chron. xxi. 1—"And Satan (an adversary) stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

These two passages, on comparison, *show that Jehovah himself was the Satan* of David in this instance.

Job i. 6-12; ii. 1-8.—On the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan (the adversary) came also among them. The Lord asked whence he came. Satan (the adversary) replied, "From going to and fro on the earth." Then followed a discussion with reference to Job's piety. Satan (the adversary) suggested that Job's service of God was not for nought; that if the Lord took away his wealth he would curse. The Lord replied, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only on himself put not forth thine hand." Soon Job lost his cattle, his servants, his children. He resignedly said, "The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." On a second similar occasion Satan (the adversary) suggested that if Job's person were touched he would "curse thee (the Lord) to thy face." The Lord said, "Behold, he is in thy hand, but spare his life." Satan (the adversary) smote Job with sore boils from head to foot. But he said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Here Job's adversary came into the presence of the Lord, among the sons of God, and discussed Job's case with Jehovah himself. Is the conception, then, that he was a messenger of the Lord, walking up and down through the earth, contemplating its inhabitants; that his observation had shown him—if men then were like what they are now—that calamities were not borne with patience, that penury and complaints, losses and curses, went together; so that, when asked his opinion about the well-to-do Job, he would not give him credit for being different to his fellows? In this way he became his Satan or adversary. This appears to be what the writer would convey. But how unlike the "roaring lion" of the New Testament.

It will be noticed how strictly the power of Job's adversary is limited to what Jehovah specifically permitted. So much so, that when the calamities actually fell on Job he described them as from the Lord. In no way whatever does the Satan here mentioned act in opposition to Jehovah.

Zech. iii. 1, 2—"And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan (the adversary) standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan (the adversary), The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel."

The conception here may be this: Joshua, with the filthy garments (figurative of the sins of Judah borne by the high priest, their representative), standing before the angel of the Lord, was resisted by "the adversary," or angel of divine justice. But the latter had to give way before the restoration of the divine favour. Or, more probably, "the adversary" may have been one of those who opposed the work of rebuilding Jerusalem, as mentioned in the Book of Ezra.

All these considerations show conclusively that in the Old Testament conception of the Almighty there is *no room* for such a being as the arch-fiend of the New.

(e) *The supernatural appearances at the crucifixion* (Matt, xxvii. 51-53; Mark xv. 38; Luke xxiii. 44, 45).

(1.) The veil of the temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

(2.) The earthquake and rending of the rocks.

(3.) Darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. (4.) The opening of the graves and the rising of the bodies of the saints after his resurrection, who went into the holy city, and appeared to many.

*John* makes no mention of these marvels, but (xix. 25-27) states that he himself was present at the crucifixion of Jesus, along with Mary, Jesus' mother, and three other women, close to the cross (not afar off, as Matthew, Mark, and Luke assert of the women), and yet he fails to confirm the other Gospels as to the earthquake and darkening of the sun. The rending of the veil of the temple, the opening of the graves, and the appearance of the risen saints would all have been known to him also, if they had occurred.

Such prodigies as these are not confined to the Gospels,—*"In the most high and palmy state of Rome, A*

## CHAPTER III. THE MIRACLES

### 1. The miracles ascribed to Jesus are,—

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#### (a.) *All manner of sickness and disease.*

Matthew.	Mark.	Luke.	John.
iv. 23-25.	i. 32-34.	iv. 40, 41.	ii. 23.
viii. 16.			
ix. 35.	iii. 10.	vi. 17-19.	
xiv. 34-36.			
xv. 30, 31.	vi. 54-56.	vii. 21.	

#### (b.) *Raising the dead.*

Jairus' daughter.	ix. 18-26.	v. 22-43.	viii. 41-56.	Silent.
Son of the widow of Nain.	Silent.	Silent.	vii. 11-18	Silent.
Lazarus.	Silent.	Silent.	Silent.	xi.

#### (c.) *Prodigies.*

Calming a storm.	viii. 23-27.	iv. 37-41.	viii. 22-25.	Silent.
Feeding 5000.	xiv. 13-21.	vi. 33-44.	ix. 12-17.	vi. 5-14
Walking on the sea.	xiv. 22-33.	vi. 45-52.	Silent.	vi. 15-21.
Feeding 4000.	xv. 32-39.	viii. 1-9.	Silent.	Silent.
Cursing the fig-tree.	xxi. 17-22.	xi. 2-14.	Silent.	Silent.
Fish with tribute money.	xvii. 24-27.	Silent.	Silent.	Silent.
Miraculous haul of fishes.	Silent.	Silent.	v. 4-11.	Silent.
Turning water into wine.	Silent.	Silent.	Silent.	ii. 1-11.

#### (d.) *Casting out devils.*

Herd of swine.	viii. 28-34.	v. 1-21.	viii. 26-40.	Silent.
Dumb devil.	ix. 32-33.	Silent.	xi. 14-15.	Silent.
In the synagogue.	xii. 22.	i. 23-28.	iv. 33-37.	Silent.

Daughter of Canaanite.	xv. 21-28.	vii. 24-30.	Silent.	Silent.
Lunatic.	xvii. 14-21.	ix. 14-29.	ix. 37-42.	Silent.
Mary Magdalene.		xvi. 9.	viii. 2.	Silent.

(e.) *Bodily ailments.*

Leprosy.	viii. 1-4.	i. 40-45.	{ v. 12-15. xvii. 11-19.	Silent.
Palsy.	{ viii. 5-13. ix. 1-8.	ii. 1-12.	v. 17-26. vii. 1-10.	Silent.
Fever.	viii. 14, 15.	i. 30, 31.	iv. 38, 39.	Silent.
Issue of blood.	ix. 18-26.	v. 22-43.	viii. 41-56.	Silent.
Blindness.	{ ix. 27-31. xx. 30-34.	viii. 22-26.	xviii. 35-43	Silent.
Deaf and dumb.		vii. 31-37.	Silent.	Silent.
The withered hand.	xii. 10.	iii. 1-6	vi. 7-10.	Silent.
Infirm woman.	Silent.	Silent.	xiii. 11-17.	Silent.
Dropsy.	Silent.	Silent.	xiv. 1-6.	Silent.
Curing a nobleman's son at a distance.	Silent.	Silent.	Silent.	iv. 46-54.
Man blind from his birth.	Silent.	Silent.	Silent.	ix. 1 38.
Impotent man, 38 years infirm.	Silent.	Silent.	Silent.	v. 1-16.

The healing power claimed for Jesus in the passages marked (a) embraces all manner of sickness, disease, and derangement. Cures were effected by his word or his touch, or upon the patient laying hold even of the hem of his garment. The contemporaneous unbelief (Matt. xi. 20-24.) of his pretensions, with such instances of superhuman power openly manifested far and wide (Matt. iv. 23-25, and ix. 35) among the cities and villages of Galilee, is the crowning marvel of all.

The special instances of his wonder-working and disease-curing power, marked (6), (c), (d), and (e), comprise all that are recorded in the four Gospels. The agreement between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, both as to the incidents and the manner of narration, is most marked. The raising of the son of the widow of Nain, the miraculous draught of fishes at the calling of Peter, James, and John, a cure of dropsy and one of infirmity are given by Luke alone. On the other hand, Luke has not the walking on the sea, the feeding of the four thousand, the cursing of the fig-tree, or the curing of the Canaanite's demon-possessed daughter, found in Matthew and Mark. And Matthew alone narrates the catching of the fish with the tribute money. But in the other instances the agreement between them is almost complete—so complete as to suggest many questions as to the real truth with reference to the compilation of the first three Gospels, questions which probably will never be solved. What, however, concerns the present purpose is that of the three the only eye-witness is Matthew, The source from which Mark and Luke derived their information is unknown, and ever will remain so. If not from Matthew (always assuming him to be the writer of the first Gospel), or from the same source as Matthew, it would be remarkable that their mode of narrating these details was so similar to his. How far then, does John, the other eye-witness, bear out Matthew, Mark, and Luke? Strange to relate, he has not one word of the casting out of devils, or of the cures of bodily distresses mentioned by the other three. Nor does he confirm the raising of Jairus' daughter, although he himself and James and Peter were the only three said to have been admitted by Jesus to witness this event, nor the resuscitation of the son of the widow of Nain, nor the calming of the storm, nor the feeding of the four thousand, nor the cursing of the fig-tree, nor the fish with the tribute money, nor the miraculous haul of fishes at his own calling to be a disciple. The miracles he does mention are *seven in all, and of these five are not in the other gospels*, although of the most striking character. They are,

1. The raising of Lazarus, four days dead.
2. Turning water into wine.
3. Curing a nobleman's son, at a distance, of fever.
4. Curing a man blind from his birth.
5. Curing a man, at the pool of Bethesda, with an infirmity of thirty-eight years' standing.

Of the twenty-four miracles recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, John, said to have been the eye-witness of all, confirms only two—viz., the feeding of the five thousand, and the walking on the sea.

These two miracles are thus a chronological break, in all the Gospel narratives, of the movements of Jesus, by which a clear comparison can be made, thus:—



### *Movements of Jesus,*

*According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, prior to feeding the five thousand, &c.*

1. Jesus went from Galilee to Judea to the baptism of John.

2. After John's imprisonment he returned to Galilee.

3. At Nazareth, Capernaum, and all about Galilee.

4. Walking by the sea of Galilee he called Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

5. Calling of Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom.

6. At Capernaum.

7. At Nain.

8. In the country of the Gadarenes.

9. He went by ship into a desert place apart, followed by a great multitude. Here the feeding of the five thousand took place. Jesus immediately afterwards "constrained" his disciples to take ship and go before him to the other side (Matthew), to Bethsaida (Mark), while he sent the multitude away; then, when he had sent the multitude away, he went into a mountain apart to pray. The disciples in the voyage across were tempest-tossed. At the fourth watch Jesus appeared walking on the sea. Soon as he went on board the wind ceased. When they had

*According to John, prior to feeding the five thousand, &c.*

a. Jesus is with John in Bethabara, beyond Jordan. Here he called Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael.

b. He is then at Cana of Galilee, where he turned the water into wine.

c. Afterwards at Capernaum.

d. Then at Jerusalem, at Passover-time, when the temple-purging scene occurred.

e. Then with his disciples in Judea baptizing. *John not yet cast into prison.*

f. Then he went to Galilee through Samaria.

g. Again at Cana of Galilee.

h. Back again to Jerusalem to a feast of the Jews.

i. Again in Galilee, crossing over the sea of Tiberias. He went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. Here the feeding of the five thousand took place, (on the plains below?) Jesus then, lest they should take him by force and make him a king, went alone again to a mountain. At even his disciples proceeded to the shore, and began to row across the sea to Capernaum; a storm arose; Jesus, walking on the sea, drew nigh; they

## *Movements of Jesus,*

*According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, after feeding the five thousand.*

1. He went to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.
2. Then to Magdala, or Dalmanutha, and Bethsaida.
3. Then to the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi.
4. Still in Galilee, paying tribute-money at Capernaum.
5. Then he went to the coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan.
6. Then he went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem.
7. He passed through Jericho.
8. At Bethphage, the Mount of Olives.
9. Ride into Jerusalem on the back of an ass, when the temple - purging scene occurred.

*According to John, after feeding the five thousand.*

- a. He continued still in Galilee.
- b. He went up to Jerusalem to the feast of tabernacles.
- c. He was at Jerusalem at the feast of dedication, at the winter season.
- d. He went away beyond Jordan, to the place where John at first baptized.
- e. He returned to Bethany.
- f. Went away to Ephraim, near to the wilderness.
- g. Again at Bethany six days before the passover.
- h. Ride into Jerusalem on the back of an ass.

As to the subsequent events, from the entrance into Jerusalem to the crucifixion, the four gospels agree in the main, though they differ in several important particulars. But from the entrance into Jerusalem back to the feeding of the five thousand, how utter the divergence! And, again, from the feeding of the five thousand back to John's baptism, how irreconcilable the accounts of the two professed eyewitnesses represented as fellow-travellers over the greater part of the journeyings mentioned! The first three gospels place all Jesus' ministry and miracles, and the calling of his disciples, as to time, after John's imprisonment, as to place, in Galilee and its neighbourhood, until he went up once for all to Jerusalem, from which he never returned. John, on the contrary, makes his ministry commence before the Baptist's imprisonment, places the calling of two of the same disciples, Andrew and Peter, while Jesus was a follower of the Baptist, and mentions three or four visits to Jerusalem before the final entry on the back of an ass. Moreover, the discourses recorded in John are very unlike the discourses in the other three narratives, and, what strikes as very remarkable, there are no parables in the fourth Gospel.

Here, then, are two witnesses, followers of Jesus, giving different and irreconcilable accounts of his ministry, his wanderings, his public utterances, his miracles; agreeing, indeed, thus far, that they both record two of the last, but even with these two (see the two paragraphs marked 9 and i above) at variance with each other in several details. Of two ordinarily intelligent eye-witnesses can it be that one would represent Jesus as "sending the multitude away," and the other as "departing from them," and the multitude next day being in the same place? or would one assert that he "constrained his disciples to take ship" and the other that he left his disciples, and that they took ship afterwards of their own accord? And yet this is what two, not ordinarily intelligent—for as to that nothing is known—but divinely inspired and divinely guided eye-witnesses affirm.

The miracles recorded in the four gospels are all of a benevolent character, except the cursing of the fig-tree and the permission given to the devils to go into the herd of swine. But notwithstanding "the good-will to men" thus displayed, the Gospels avow that Jesus' wonder-working failed to convince or to captivate by far the greater part of his contemporaries. Chorazin, Bethsaida, Tyre, Sidon, and Capernaum are all denounced, and assigned a doom more terrible than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, because of their unbelief. And against this general contemporaneous unbelief what is there to place? The single testimony of Matthew the publican for a score of miracles which he is said to have witnessed, confirmed by the hearsay testimony of Mark and Luke, but quite unsupported by the testimony of John the Galilean fisherman, who is also said to have witnessed them. Again, the single testimony of John, unsupported by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for five most marvellous events, including the raising from the dead of a man who had been some time buried. The united testimony, weakened by divergence in detail, of Matthew and John, for only two of the alleged miracles, and the hearsay account of Luke for the raising from the dead of the son of the widow of Nain, quite unsupported by either Matthew or John. And then recurs the question: Would an Almighty maker of the universe, wishing to show compassion to his creatures, and to accredit, not only to the men living at the time of his appearance, but to all subsequent ages, by undoubted testimonies, a messenger from himself (the son of his own right

hand), and to accredit him, moreover, by such testimonies as were most suited to the comprehension of men, have allowed the record of these credentials, on belief or unbelief on which the eternal doom of each individual man henceforth would depend, to rest on evidence so worthless—taken at its very best—as this?

2. The following miraculous events are ascribed to the apostles:—

- Acts ii. 1-13. The gift of tongues.*
- " *ii. 43. Wonders and signs generally.*
- " *iii. 1-11. Cure of lame man by Peter and John.*
- " *v. 1-11. The yielding up the ghost by Ananias and Sapphira at the word of Peter.*
- " *v. 15, 16. Cures at the least shadow of Peter.*
- " *v. 17-20. Opening of the prison for Peter and John by the angel of the Lord.*
- " *vi. 8. Stephen's wonders and miracles.*
- " *viii. 5-8. Cures by Philip of unclean spirits, and of the palsied and lame.*
- " *ix. 13-22. Ananias cures Saul of blindness.*
- " *ix. 32-35. Cure by Peter of one sick of the palsy.*
- " *ix. 36-43. Peter restores Dorcas to life.*
- Acts x. 1-48. Angel-appearance to Cornelius; trance of Peter.*
- " *xii. 7-10. Opening of the prison for Peter by an angel of the Lord.*
- " *xiii. 8-11. Blinding of Elymas by Paul.*
- " *xiv. 3. Signs and wonders generally by Paul and Barnabas.*
- " *xiv. 8-10. Cure of a cripple by Paul.*
- " *xvi. 16-18. Curing a damsel possessed by a spirit of divination.*
- " *xvi. 25-27. Earthquake while Paul and Silas were singing praises to God in the stocks at Philippi.*
- " *xix. 6. Disciples at Ephesus speaking with tongues when Paul laid his hands on them.*
- " *xix. 11, 12. Diseases and evil spirits expelled by aprons and handkerchiefs taken from Paul's body.*
- " *xix. 15. Testimony of the evil spirit to Jesus and Paul.*
- " *xx. 9-12. Restoration of Eutychus by Paul.*
- " *xxviii. 4. Viper shaken off Paul's hand without hurting him.*
- " *xxviii. 8. Bloody flux and other diseases cured.*

These wondrous occurrences rest on the record of Luke alone. The earlier portion, if not the whole of them, had taken place before the Gospels were written. The gift of tongues would have been vividly present to the minds of Matthew and John, who were among the recipients of this marvellous endowment. Mark (Acts xii. 12) would certainly have been aware of the grave events connected with the death-dooming, life-restoring, prison-opening Peter. A single chapter at the end of the gospel of either Matthew, John, or Mark would have been sufficient to contain the confirmation of the more important of these wonders, and surely so much might have been expected from the "divinely-chosen" witnesses, those whose mission it was to declare the whole counsel of God, to testify to each divine confirmation within their knowledge of the truth of the Gospel. What, then, can be said of their silence? Who was Luke that they should have left so important a duty to him?

Previous to Acts xvi. 10 (where the "we" in the narrative commences), Luke was not, so far as can be gathered, an eye-witness of any of the events he relates, and his informant is unknown. Nor does he profess to have been an eye-witness of the Ephesian disciples speaking with tongues, the cures, and the testimony of the evil spirit mentioned in Acts xix. 6, 15. He was present at the restoration of Eutychus, but it is not altogether clear whether he means to describe this as a miracle. The only others of which he was an eye-witness are the casting out of the spirit of divination (Acts xvi. 16-18), and what are mentioned in chap. xxviii. His reference to the "spirit of divination" as a real power shows that he was imbued with the common superstition, that he recognised the "abominations of those nations" denounced by Moses. In chap. xxviii. the innocuous viper can scarcely be regarded as a miracle, and possibly the bloody flux and other diseases may have given way to other treatment over and above the praying and laying on of Paul's hands. The general contradiction between Luke in the Acts and Paul in his Epistles with reference to Paul's movements, will be fully detailed in considering the testimonies to the resurrection of Jesus.

At the very best, therefore, scarcely any one of the apostolic miracles can be said to rest on the testimony of a single eye-witness. They are discredited by the silence of the actual eye-witnesses, Matthew and John, whose records, it is here assumed, exist; and Luke's credibility is, moreover, greatly affected by the serious conflict of testimony between himself and Paul. (See Chap. V.)

The healing power claimed for the apostles quite rivals that of Jesus. Cures were effected by the least shadow of Peter, and by "handkerchiefs and aprons from Paul's body." Two of the miracles, however, differ from those of Jesus in that they are of a vindictive nature. These are the doom of Ananias and Sapphira, and the blinding of Elymas. A more effective weapon for priestly domination and exaction than the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira—no time for repentance allowed—because they deceived the apostles as to the price their property fetched, could not have been devised. Peter's question, "Sold ye the land for so much," shows the inquisitorial tendency, so wonderfully developed under the Christian name among all sects and creeds in later times. So far as can be gathered from the Gospels, the fare on which Jesus and his disciples lived was a poor one. Bread and fish are mentioned; wine only once, at the last supper; but this is not confirmed by John. And how their food was come by is left doubtful. Luke states that certain women followed Jesus, who ministered to him of their substance. And John relates that as soon as the raising of Lazarus from the dead became known, the chief priests sought to arrest Jesus, when he went away to the city Ephraim, near to the wilderness, and there continued with his disciples. Here was a remarkable shrinking from the chief priests of one who had power to restore life to the dead. Six days before the Passover he came again to Bethany, where he had supper with the raised Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha served; Mary anointed his feet with costly ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair. Judas Iscariot grumbled at the waste: "Why," he said, "was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" Jesus replied that she had done it against the day of his burying. The narrator—John, as we assume, a companion of Jesus—adds, "This he said not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." Most marvellous! for what do such expressions as to the vocation of Judas imply? Was he but a type

of those who, under the authority of the name and supernatural pretensions of his master, under various lofty titles, from "holy" to "reverend," with intensifying adjectives prefixed, have since imposed upon mankind, controlled rulers and deluded nations, opposed freedom and denounced enlightenment, for the sake of their order, their influence, their position, their emoluments?

But, in whatever way they maintained themselves, their life was a poor one. "The Son of man had not where to lay his head." When, therefore, the apostles found that their testimony to the resurrection of Jesus brought about such a result as is described Acts iv. 32-35, the change must have been a most agreeable one to them. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; and they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

Here were they (assuming Luke's account to be true) leaders of a communistic society, where all were well cared for, instead of earning a hard livelihood as fishermen, or wandering about Galilee and Judea as mendicants or otherwise; and even with the persecution it is said to have brought from the Jewish rulers, the change must have been in every way preferable. What more favourable opportunity than this could have been found, "while they were giving themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word," too busy even to attend to the distribution of charity, to settle the accounts they were to propagate of Jesus' life and teaching, his miraculous deeds, his resurrection and ascension, and to mould them, so far as possible, in accordance with the Jewish prophecies of the Messiah? But whether the wonders of the four gospels originated thus or otherwise, Truth, ever triumphant in the end, confounds the devices of designing, as well as the illusions of weak-minded men, and reveals to her worshippers the flaws and the hollowness that invariably characterise evidence in support of superhuman pretence, intended to exercise sway over the consciences of men.

## CHAPTER IV. THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY

If it be assumed that the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments were written by those whose names they bear, and that they have been handed down intact, prophecies uttered from Moses to Malachi, b.c. 1500 to B.C. 400, fulfilled in the person of Jesus in so complete a manner as to show that they could refer in their entirety to no one else, would be not only a most trustworthy credential to Jesus himself, but also a conclusive proof of the divine inspiration of those who uttered them, the power of foretelling the remote future—all the more of foretelling the supernatural—being clearly an attribute of an Almighty alone. Peter refers to the "more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place," and he states that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." If, on the other hand, the prophecies arrogated to Jesus are properly applicable to events altogether unconnected with his life and alleged mission, and if there are strained and untenable appropriations of Old Testament passages by the writers of the New Testament, the claim of the New Testament to be a development and fulfilment of the Old will be altogether destroyed, and the candour of its writers discredited. This portion of the inquiry, therefore, is of very great importance.

In the writings of the Christian clergy, almost every incident recorded in the Old Testament is explained by some method, more or less ingenious, as typical of the Messiah as represented by Jesus. But the present inquiry, with two or three exceptions, will be confined to the instances claimed by the writers of the New Testament as fulfilments of Jewish prophecy. It is clear that if these cannot be maintained, neither can any subsequent interpretations.

### (a.) *Prophecies claimed for John the Baptist*

*First.*—Malachi iii. 1; Luke vii. 27.

In the passage in Malachi there are three designations:—

1. "My messenger," i.e., the angel of the Lord.
2. "The Lord whom ye seek."
3. "The messenger (angel) of the covenant whom ye de-light in."

And the words "He shall come" indicate that all these titles are meant for the same person.

Now, in Exodus there are various allusions to the angel of the Lord preceding his people Israel. Chap. xiv. 19,— "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them." Chap. xxiii. 20,— "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him... for my name is in him." Similar passages are Exodus xxxii. 34; xxxiii. 2-14; Numbers xx. 16.

The manifestation, therefore, expected by Malachi was of the dread angel of the covenant so revered in the Mosaic writings. Most Christians believe that this angel was Jesus the Messiah himself. But Luke, altering the quotation from "me" to "thee," affirms that Jesus himself applied it to John the Baptist. If the quotation in Luke is not from Malachi, but part of Exodus xxiii. 20 just referred to, "thee" is correct, but it still implies that John the Baptist and the angel of the Exodus were one. Who has made the mistake? Jesus in ascribing this quotation to John, or Luke in making Jesus so ascribe it?

*Second.*—Malachi iv. 5; Luke i. 16, 17; Matthew xi. 14; xvii. 11-13; Mark ix. 11-13.

The Elijah of Malachi was to come "to you" (Israel), (1.) Before the great and terrible day of the Lord; (2.) to

turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; (3.) lest I (the Lord) come and smite the earth with a curse.

Luke's authoritative angel predicted that John was, (1.) To go before him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elias; (2.) to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; (3.) to make ready a people prepared-for the Lord.

Jesus states of John, (1.) If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come; (2.) "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed," Mark adds, "as it is written of him."

It is certainly nowhere written (in the Old Testament) that the people Elijah is to be sent among are to do *to him* whatsoever *they* list. The Elijah of Malachi is *to turn them*, and this, by the account of the New Testament writers, John the Baptist did not accomplish.

*Third.*—Isa. mh. xl. 3; Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 2, 3; Luke iii. 4-6; John i. 23.

If Isaiah's doctrine implies that before the majesty of the eternal, the infinite, universe, the distinctions of brief-lived mortals disappear, and that its glory and its operations are open to all flesh alike to behold and to investigate; that though we shall perish, it, in one or other of its various forms, will evermore endure,—then the "voice of one crying in the wilderness" may still refresh and cheer the human heart, whether it be the voice of Isaiah, John the Baptist, or any other seer or man. What it proclaims is the heritage of all.

(b.) *Claim of Jesus to be the seed of the woman who bruised the serpent's head.*

Genesis iii. 15; Matt. iii. 17; xiii. 38; xxiii. 33; John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 8; Heb. ii. 14, 15; Kev. xii. 9; xx. 2. By believers that Jesus is the Christ the passage in Genesis is held to be a prophecy that received its fulfilment in him. He was the seed of the woman who bruised the head of the serpent, by restoring that portion of the human race who believe in him to the divine favour lost through the wiles of the serpent. The serpent is Satan, his seed mankind in their natural state; they bruised the heel (not a deadly part) of the seed of the woman by crucifying Christ. Jesus, who merely laid down his life that he might take it again, and thus expiated the sins of his people, in turn bruised the head (a deadly part) of the serpent. Such is the meaning of Genesis iii. 15, indicated by the writers of the New Testament four thousand years after the words are said to have been uttered by God.

Will the passage then bear any such interpretation?

The serpent tempted Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; she induced her husband to do the same. For this the three were sentenced thus:—

1. *The man*, that he should eat bread by the sweat of his brow through culture of the ground, cursed for his sake, until his return to the dust from whence he came.

This is perfectly clear: it admits of no double interpretation.

2. *The woman*, that she should bring forth in pain, and be in subjection to her husband.

This is also quite plain, and in accordance with natural fact, whether the cause be the eating of the forbidden fruit or not.

3. *The serpent*, that he should go upon his belly, that he should eat dust, that he should hate mankind, that mankind should hate him, that men should bruise his head, that he should bruise men's heel.

Is there anything here beyond natural fact more than in the case of the man or woman? Men trample on serpents, serpents bite men from heel to knee; they cannot as a rule strike higher.

What else, then, can be said of all these passages, than that they are exact descriptions of the lot on earth of men, women, and serpents, whether or not caused by eating the forbidden fruit?

What is certain, however, is that this lot has not been reversed, or even alleviated by the coming of Jesus. Men live on the fruits of the ground brought forth by culture, until they decay and die; women bear children in pain; serpents crawl along the ground as before. If these are the works of the devil, why has Jesus not destroyed them? Why since his advent do they exist as before? He has expiated guilt, he has ascended into heaven, all power is his in heaven and in earth. Why then does the devil still triumph on earth? Why do the so-called curses, which the serpent's temptation of Eve brought, continue.

Jesus, it is said, is to destroy the works of the devil, but only in those who believe in him, and even in their case not in this world. When he comes again in glory he is to raise their bodies, he is to give them a new heaven and a new earth, those now existing being destroyed. The bodies of those who do not believe are also to be raised, but are to be given over to everlasting fire.

The devil, then, so far as death, toil, and suffering are concerned, is to triumph on earth over all mankind till the end of time; and to all eternity he is to triumph over the greater part, or a very great part of the human race, who through his means are to suffer the anguish of the bottomless pit. How then can it be said that Christ was manifested that he might destroy the works of the eternally triumphant devil. How has the seed of the woman bruised the head of the serpent, if Jesus was the seed and the devil the serpent? It is clear, if Christian doctrine be true, that the devil, by the curses he has brought on men—death, toil, child-bearing pangs—is to reign victorious on earth over the whole human race, and is also in eternity to reign victorious over a great part of the human race doomed to everlasting anguish. So the dominion of the evil One is to be eternal, Jesus and what he has done notwithstanding.

It may here, perhaps, without impropriety, be pointed out that probably there is no more striking illustration of what has been regarded as the perfection of the art of fiction-framing than the Mosaic account of the fall of man. Aristotle (*Poet*, chap. xiv.) ascribes this art to Homer in the highest degree,—that he taught others how *to feign in a proper manner*, by making a true consequent follow a false antecedent; so that the mind, knowing the consequent to be true, is led to believe that the antecedent is true as well. In the present case, see how the natural facts of decay and death, necessary labour, child-bearing pain, and serpent-crawling and venomousness, are made to follow as results of the forbidden fruit, the serpent's vindictiveness, and Eve and Adam's surrender; so that men, knowing the natural facts to be true, have been captivated into believing that the assigned causes are also true.

(c.) *Claim of Jesus to be the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations should be blessed* (Genesis xii. 3; xviii. 18; xxii. 18; Acts iii. 25; Galatians iii. 8).

The promise said to have been made by God to Abraham, that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, is claimed for Jesus and for those who believe in him. His redeemed are to come out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, and through his mercy and merits they are to inherit the mansions of bliss evermore. He is thus the seed in whom all nations (i.e., the believing portion of all nations) of the earth (i.e., not on the earth but in heaven) shall be blessed.

"By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice."

These lofty phrases were the expression of the high aspiration and fond belief of the Jewish people, either under the sway of their lawgiver Moses (always on the assumption that he was the writer of Genesis), leading them triumphantly on to the conquest of Canaan, the home of their traditional ancestor, or when they were settled as a nation in Palestine. "In thy seed all nations of the earth shall be blessed" is, further, an expectation of the coming subjection of the human race to the law and revelation of Moses. The Gibeons presented themselves thus: "From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the Lord thy God;" and the following passage is brimful of the same hope: "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be established above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

The expectation that Palestine will again be restored to the Jews, that their temple service at Jerusalem will be re-established in all its glory, and that the other nations of the earth will flock thither for enlightenment, and be guided by the precepts of the Jewish lawgivers, has certainly so far not been realised on earth. The Jewish race, to the present day, live in hope of its fulfilment. Christians explain its fulfilment figuratively by the power and attributes they ascribe to Jesus. But sober fact shows that it is a fond and, as it has proved, futile patriotic aspiration.

Are the qualities of the Jewish race such as to warrant their high claim to be leaders of men—the nation which, first in divine favour and knowledge, should stand, as it were, between the Almighty and the other nations of the earth? The utmost tenacity of purpose, unflinching faith in their destiny, triumphant endurance of reverses, skill and aptitude, not only for ordinary worldly intercourse and dealing, but for the arts which charm the soul and elevate life; exalted conception of the omnipotence of the deity, in so far as to view with intense abhorrence that he should be likened to any visible creature, and, although tainted by giving a mind to the Almighty like their own (for the deity of the Pentateuch, in many respects, is but an almighty Israelite, bloodthirsty and unsparing to aliens in race and creed), still an exalted conception as compared to the gods of other nations,—all these qualities are theirs. Wherein do they fail? What is their defect? The defect of the coward—want of moral courage. Deceit and stratagem rather than open conduct are their characteristics. Abraham, for fear of his life (Genesis x. 12-20), lied and risked his wife's dishonour. Isaac (xxvi. 6-11) did the same. Jacob by vile deceit obtained his father's blessing (xxvii. 1-29), and supplanted his brother. Jacob's sons (xxxvii. 18-26), to rid themselves of their brother Joseph, of whom they were jealous, sold him as a slave, and by a stratagem led their father to think that he was killed by a wild beast. Joseph xlv. 1-13 detained his brothers by a trick. In the Exodus xi 1-3; xii. 35, 36 the Israelites, by direction of *the Lord to Moses*, under pretence of borrowing, *spoiled* the Egyptians of their jewels of gold and silver. The warrior Joab (2 Sam. iii. 27) treacherously slew the valiant Abner. David (2 Sam. xi. 2-17) directed that Uriah the Hittite, a self-denying soldier, should be placed in the forefront of the battle, where death was certain, in order that, the husband being removed, the king might marry the wife he had already seduced. David too, on his deathbed (1 Kings ii. 1-10), charged his son Solomon to violate the oath he himself had sworn by the Lord to spare Shimei the Benjamite; and also charged him not to let the hoar head of his own general, Joab, go down to the grave in peace; and Solomon, finding specious pretexts, sent his butcher, Benaiah (1 Kings ii. 12-46), to fall on these two old men, and on his own brother Adonijah. The subsequent history of the Jews, whether as a nation or as a dispersed people, exhibits the same striking qualities, with the same fatal defect. Far be it from the nations of the earth ever to submit to such leadership. May not this remarkable people rather serve as a warning of what the highest qualities, unaccompanied with courage and open conduct, produce.

(d.) *Claim of Jesus to be the "Shiloh" of Genesis* (Genesis xlix. 10).

"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."

This prophecy, put by Moses into the mouth of the dying Jacob in the year b.c. 1689, is not claimed for Jesus by the writers of the New Testament, but is usually referred to by Christians of the present day, as one of the most conclusive instances of the fulfilment of prophecy by the advent of Jesus. Jacob's vaticination is,—

1. That neither the sceptre nor a lawgiver shall depart from Judah.

This implies that at the time of the prophecy Judah had a sceptre and a lawgiver, which was not the case. But it will be affirmed that Jacob's assertion was prophetic, that he foresaw the time when Judah would have the kingly power among his brethren, which did not occur till the time of David.

2. Until Shiloh (he whose it is) come.

3. And unto him shall the gathering of the people be, i.e., at the coming of Shiloh, the kingship, and lawgiving, and the people's allegiance shall be transferred from Judah to him.

Jereboam, under whom all Israel, excepting Judah and Benjamin, revolted from the house of David, has probably the best claim to be the "Shiloh" of Genesis; but the consideration of this point, involving, as it does, inquiry into the actual date of the augury and the purpose for which it was promulgated, is quite outside the present purpose.

Christians, in maintaining that Jesus is the "Shiloh," explain that the tribe of Judah did not lose self-

government until Archelaus was banished by Augustus in a.d. 6, and Judea then annexed to the province of Syria. The sceptre and the lawgiver then departed from Judah: it was transferred to the wondrous child, and "the people gathered unto him" refers not to the Jewish nation, but to believers in Jesus throughout the world.

Let, then, the assertion that the sceptre and a lawgiver did not depart from Judah until the time of Jesus be compared with the utterances of the prophet Jeremiah on the Babylonish captivity (Lam. i. 6; il 9; v. 11-16) —"Her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more" is the burden of these passages. It must surely be admitted that Jeremiah was a more competent authority for determining when the sceptre and a lawgiver departed from Judah, than Christians of the present day. Clearly, then, the Shiloh of Jacob (whomever or whatever Shiloh may refer to) must have come before the Babylonish captivity, or Jacob's prophecy has been falsified.

As Genesis xlix. 10, however, is not claimed by the New Testament writers for Jesus, the discrepancy in this instance between Jeremiah's views and those of modern Christians does not affect their position.

(e.) *Claim of Jesus to be the successor of Moses* (Deut. xviii. 15-22; Acts iii. 22, 23).

"I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee," &c.

Moses in this passage so clearly refers to Joshua (see Joshua i. 1-9), who was to take his place as leader of the Israelites, that any other construction is entirely shut out. The assertion that Jesus of Nazareth, despised by his countrymen, homeless, and poor (even if he had been the son of the Eternal in disguise), in any way resembled Moses the successful warrior and lawgiver, was well put into the mouth of the rash-spoken Peter.

(f1.) *Claim of Jesus to be the "Son of David"* To establish the descent of Jesus from David, two different detailed genealogies are given by Matthew and Luke.

1. Matthew (i. 1-17) traces the descent of Joseph, the reputed father of Jesus, from Abraham, through David and Solomon, down to Salathiel and Zorobabel, and from them to Joseph, and states that there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, the same number from David to the captivity, and the same number from the captivity to Jesus. The fourteen names given, from Abraham to David inclusive, agree with the Hebrew Chronicles; but to reduce to fourteen the names from Solomon to Jechonias, king of the first captivity, inclusive, no fewer than four persons, to wit, Ahaziah; Joash, and Amaziah, the sixth, seventh, and eighth from Solomon, and Jehoiakim, the father of Jechonias, are omitted, (1 Chron. iii.) See, for the utterly puerile fancy of breaking up Christ's descent into three equal periods of fourteen generations, how the compiler scruples not to mutilate a genealogy, the whole of which must have been before him; for it cannot be supposed that he was unacquainted with the books of Kings and Chronicles in the Old Testament! The fourteen names from Jechonias to Jesus there is no means of ascertaining from whom Matthew received. Joseph, being of the house and lineage of David, may have had a record of his descent, and Matthew may have received it either from Joseph or from one of the brothers of Jesus, or the mutilator of the second set of fourteen may readily have found the third.

2. The genealogy given by Luke (iii. 23-38) contains so striking a divergence from that of Matthew, that many professed believers in the plenary inspiration and word-infallibility of the New Testament scriptures have endeavoured to explain it away by various considerations, none of which, however, to any truth-loving mind would appear satisfactory. Luke traces the descent from Joseph backwards to Zorobabel and Salathiel through *eighteen* persons, not one of whose names agrees with any of the *nine* in Matthew who cover the same period, unless it be that of the grandfather of Joseph, who is called in the one list Matthan and in the other Matthat. It has been suggested that the one list contains Joseph's own ancestors, the other his ancestors in right of his wife—i.e., Mary's ancestors. But this explanation fails in view of the further divergence of tracing Salathiel's descent back, not to Solomon through the kingly line, as Matthew does, but to Nathan, another son of David. Luke or Luke's, informant is here also at variance with the Old Testament Chronicles, which trace Salathiel's descent to Solomon, and the names he inserts between Salathiel and Nathan are not found in any other record.

On the question of Jesus' genealogy there remains this further consideration: If Joseph was not his real father, Joseph's descent would not make Jesus of "the seed of David according to the flesh." Whence then sprung his mother Mary? The gospels are silent Cousin Elizabeth was of the daughters of Aaron, but was Mary of the daughters of Aaron or of the daughters of David?

(f2.) *Claim of Jesus to be the Son of David* (Psalm ex. 1; Matt. xxii. 41-46).

"The Lord said unto my lord," &c. Jesus asked the Pharisees. If then David in spirit called Christ Lord, how is he his son? "And no man was able to answer him a word," &c.

The Pharisees must have been very ignorant of their own scriptures, if they were unable to answer the question of Jesus. "My lord," in the Old Testament, is frequently applied to superiors. Hannah called the high priest Eli "my lord." The same designation was given by David to Saul, by Abigail to David, by Abner to David. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is specially commended in the New Testament for the respect she showed to her husband in calling him "lord." Joseph applied the same title to himself, "God hath made me lord of all Egypt." And Potiphar is called Joseph's "master," the same word translated elsewhere "lord." Psalm ex. is thus a flattering effusion to David, whom the singer designates "my lord," describing his favour with *the* Lord (Jehovah), his ruling in the midst of his enemies, his similarity to the priest-king Melchisedek, and his success in war.

(g.) *Claim of Jesus to be "Immanuel"* (Isaiah vii. 10-16; viii. 1-8; Matt. i. 21-23).

The prophecy in Isaiah refers to a sign to be given to Ahaz, King of Judea, to encourage him under the invasion, or threatened invasion, of his country by the kings of Syria and Israel. The sign was to be,—1. The conception by a virgin of a son; 2. that she should call his name "Immanuel," translated "God with us;" 3. the removal of the kings of Syria and Israel before the child emerged from infancy.

Following on this, and in continuation of the same subject, Isaiah narrates,—1. That he went unto the prophetess, the result being that she bore a son; 2. that the Lord told him to call his name "Maber-shalal-hash-baz," translated "making speed to the spoil he hasteneth the prey;" 3. the removal by the superior force of the Assyrian monarch of the riches of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria, before the child could cry

"father" or "mother."

The plain meaning, then, of all this is that the sign was to be given to Ahaz,—if realised, it must necessarily have been realised in his lifetime; also that the overthrow of Syria and Israel was to take place during the infancy of the child. To affirm, as Matthew does, that it is a prophecy *fulfilled* by a birth that occurred seven centuries after the events it refers to, surely requires an unbounded credulity.

Does the prophet refer to two children, "Immanuel" and "Maher-shalal-hash-baz"? Or was the prophetess "the virgin," and these two names bestowed on her child? The condition applying equally to both names, that Syria and Israel were to be overrun during the infancy of the child, is almost conclusive in favour of the latter construction. Isaiah had thus taken immediate steps to ensure the fulfilment of his prophecy. The word translated "virgin" is not the same as is used in such passages as Gen. xxiv. 16, Lev. xxi. 3, and may have been applicable to any modest and chaste married woman.

The mother in calling the child Immanuel, followed the common Hebrew custom of forming names by combining an appropriate phrase with the word "El," God. Thus Hagar was directed by the angel in the wilderness to call her son "Ishmael," "God who hears." Hannah too named the son she had longed and prayed for "Samuel," "asked of God". The sign to Ahaz was thus, in the extremity he was relieved from, most appropriately named "Immanuel," "God with us," or "God on our side;" and the same name in the next chapter (Isaiah viii. 8) is applied to the deity himself, "the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel," i.e., "God on our side."

In any reading of Isaiah's prophecy it cannot be inferred that the conception of the virgin was to be by supernatural power. Nor from one end of the Jewish scriptures to the other is there the slightest support to such a notion as the deity begetting a mortal child by a mortal woman.

(h.) *Claim of Jesus to be the "Great Light" seen by the dwellers in Zebidon and Naphtali, and the "Wonderful," the "Counsellor," the "Establisher of the throne of David" &c.* (Isaiah ix. 1-7; Matt. iv. 12-16; Luke i. 32, 33; Psalm xvi. 10; Acts ii. 29-31; xiii. 35-37.)

Zebulon and Naphtali were the two most northerly tribes of Israel. Their territories extended from the borders of the kingdom of Syria southwards, on the west of Jordan, to rather below the point where that river issues from the Lake of Galilee. In warlike expeditions they were generally associated: "Zebulon and Naphtali were a people that jeopardised their lives unto the death in the high places of the field" (Judges v. 18). Thus situated, their country was always the first to be overrun in an invasion from the north. Isaiah ix. 1 refers to two such invasions, the second more severe than the first. Then (ix. 2-5) he glorifies Jehovah ("thou" will be held to apply to Jehovah) for a deliverance from an oppression of Judah in some degree similar, though not so severe as the second affliction of Zebulon and Naphtali. This deliverance refers either to the retreat of the kings of Syria and Israel from before Jerusalem (Isaiah vii. 1), or more probably relief from the overflowing of the king of Assyria (Isaiah viii. 7, 8). The entire prophecy of Isaiah, it must be kept in view, had reference to Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah i. 1). It will be noticed that Isaiah in all this is referring to past events.

Then (chap. ix. 7, 8) he refers to the birth of a child which had already taken place, who is to be called "Wonderful," "Counsellor," "the Mighty God," "the Everlasting Father," "the Prince of Peace," &c. In two of these expressions he follows the Hebrew custom already mentioned, of forming names by combining an adjective or other phrase with the designation of the Almighty.

He goes on to affirm that this child shall rule in Judah on the throne of David; that there shall be no end of his government and peace; that he will order and establish the kingdom with judgment and justice for evermore.

What child is the prophet referring to?—"Immanuel" of the seventh chapter, or "Maher-shalal-hash-baz" of the eighth chapter? Clearly not; for if they are two names of the same child, he was the son of Isaiah and the prophetess, whereas the child of the ninth chapter is to sit on the throne of David.

Was the reference then to Hezekiah, written in his youth, when indications of the zeal for the law and ritual of Moses, which distinguished his reign, may have appeared? Most likely; but whether or not, it is clear that the "child" referred to *was born* when Isaiah wrote, and had not yet begun to reign.

The phrases "no end" and "henceforth even for ever," may be compared with Psalm lxxxix. 3, 4,—*"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations."* These lofty anticipations have not been realised. Where is the throne of David?

The two first verses of the ninth chapter of Isaiah are claimed for Jesus by Matthew. In quoting them he leaves out the portion referring to the invasion of Zebulon and Naphtali. Galilee of the nations, or populous Galilee, is called Galilee of the Gentiles, and is referred to as the same as Zebulon and Naphtali; whereas Isaiah makes a distinction, Galilee in his view probably being the southern part of Zebulon westward to the sea, including Asher.

Matthew, however, boldly affirms that the visit of Jesus to Capernaum was the fulfilment of Isaiah ix. 1, 2,—the fulfilment, that is, of what Isaiah, when he wrote, considered already past. But if the citizens of Capernaum in Jesus' time were the "people that walked in darkness," and Jesus was the "great light" which they saw shining upon them "in the land of the shadow of death" (the contrast between the passage in Isaiah and this puerile so-called fulfilment of it is too absurd to be discussed seriously), they nowise appreciated their good fortune. Shortly Jesus denounced the city thus,—*"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day."* Certainly there had been no deliverance for Capernaum.

The passage in Luke i. 32, 33, implies, and it is held by Christians generally, that the promises of Jehovah by the mouth of his prophets to David, with reference to the stability of his kingdom, were fulfilled in Jesus. These promises occur in the Old Testament in many forms, thus:—

1. That after David's death his seed should succeed to his throne, generation after generation, without end (2 Sam. vii. 12-16; Psalm lxxxix. 20-37). He was God's holy one, who should not see corruption; his soul would not be left in hell (the grave). To David's line would be applicable evermore what is said of the king of our own country, "who never dies," "The king is dead: long live the king."



2. That if his descendants should break the divine laws, they would be chastened, but not "put away from" the kingdom, as in the case of Saul (2 Sam. vii. 14, 45; Psalm lxxxix. 30-37).

Now, as undoubted matter of fact, the Babylonish captivity was the falsification of all such vaticinations, more particularly of that which affirmed that the descendants of David should not be treated as Saul was. If they sinned they were to be chastened, not deposed. In the return from Babylon, Zerubbabel is the only descendant of David mentioned as in authority, and after him there is nothing to show that even one of the royal line, far less any succession of the royal line, exercised sway over the Jews. The government passed to the "high priests." Jehovah had *not* "sworn in truth unto David."

But leaping over the indubitable falsification of the prediction by the overthrow of the "throne of David" in Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, and the fact that from the time of Zerubbabel the "line" of David had sunk into obscurity, it is claimed for Jesus that he was the "real" son of David referred to, that he has risen from the dead and has ascended into heaven. He saw no corruption; he reigns now in the hearts of his people. He will be their king for evermore, when he returns to earth "to take to him his great power and reign."

Is this grand hope of the Christian, then, to prove as misleading as the Jewish anticipation of the everlasting throne of David? or has Jesus actually risen from the dead? The consideration of the evidence of the resurrection will form Chap. V. of this inquiry.

(i.) *Prophecies claimed in connection with the birth of Jesus*, 1. Micah v. 2; Matt. ii. 4-6. Compare Micah with Psalm cxxxii., where David vows, "I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood.... Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou, and the ark of thy strength." "The mighty God of Jacob" corresponds to the ruler of Israel, "whose goings forth have been of old from everlasting." Micah may be referring to the deity in some connection, not now at all clear, with his habitation heard of at Ephratah, whence his laws, or other manifestations of his power, were to proceed.

The passage in Matthew is in connection with the incredible story of the wise men of the East; and it represents the Jewish priests assuring Herod that the Ruler of Israel, whose goings forth were of old from everlasting, was *to be born* in Bethlehem, not, as the prophecy states, that he was to come forth from there to be ruler. The twisting of the passage is very disingenuous.

2. Hosea ii. 15; xi. 1; Matt. ii. 14. Hosea clearly refers to the exodus under Moses: his expressions are in the past tense. Matthew's application of them to Jesus requires no comment.

3. Jeremiah xxxi. 15; Matt. ii. 17, 18. Ramah was in the country of Benjamin, whose descendants are called the children of Rachel, his mother. Jeremiah's prophecy clearly refers to their captivity in Babylon and their expected return. What can be said of Matthew's application of it to an alleged massacre at Bethlehem in the country of Judah, six centuries after the captivity? In no sense were the descendants of Judah the children of Rachel. Rachel died, and was buried at or near Bethlehem; but surely no one, not even the most credulous Christian, will assert that this makes her the mother of the line of Judah, afterwards settled there. Moreover, Jeremiah's reference is to Ramah, and cannot apply to Bethlehem.

4. Matt. ii. 23. Because Jesus was taken as a child to Nazareth, and brought up there, it is asserted that he fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene." Nowhere in the Old Testament can this be found. If a Nazarite is meant—one unshaven, and an abstainer from wine and strong drink—the character does not apply to Jesus, who "came eating and drinking." But a Nazarite was the designation of an order, not a name for the dweller in any particular locality. Nazarene was the earlier designation of the disciples of Jesus. They were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts xi. 26).

(j.) *The temple-purging* (Psalm lxix. 9; John ii. 17).

The circumstance referred to in the passage from John is that Jesus at passover-time, before the Baptist's imprisonment, went up to Jerusalem, entered into the temple, and let loose his indignation by driving out the money-changers, the cattle-dealers, and dove-sellers with a scourge of small cords, upsetting their tables, and pouring out their money. "Take these things hence," he said, "make not my Father's house a house of merchandise."

Matthew xxi. 12, 13; Mark xi. 15-17; and Luke xix. 45, 46, differ from John, in so far that they place this temple-purging at the time of Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem. Could such an extraordinary breach of the peace have occurred in any country under a Roman governor, without summary justice on the offender? Upsetting money-dealers' tables, pouring out their money, overturning the seats of the sellers of doves, and driving them from their stands, for which most probably they paid custom, if not to the state, to the temple-priests, and the disturber allowed to go away scot-free in any orderly community! Utterly incredible. And such conduct ascribed to one for whom the power and attributes of the Almighty are claimed!

(k.) *The entrance into Jerusalem on the back of an ass* (Zech. ix. 9; Matt. xxi. 4-6). The meekness of Jesus on this occasion is scarcely borne out by the scene referred to in last paragraph (j.) which, according to Matthew, followed immediately on his entrance into the city.

The prophecy of Zechariah was during the building of the second temple, and most probably referred to the lowly appearance made by Zerubbabel, the prince of Judah, as compared to that of his royal ancestors.

(1.) *The scene in the synagogue of Nazareth* (Isaiah lxi. 1; Luke iv. 16-21). Isaiah's high-sounding prophecy is said to have been fulfilled thus—

1. Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and as his custom was he entered the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. The book of the prophet Esaias being delivered to him, he read part of this passage. Then he closed the book, gave it again to the minister, and sat down.

2. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began to declare, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Wondering at these gracious words, they inquired, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

3. He retorted that no prophet is accepted in his own country, and cited cases from the Old Testament where, in times of extremity, no more than one favoured individual was relieved by the timely arrival of a prophet sent from God. (Contrast this with the prophecy, "to comfort all that mourn.")

4. Roused to wrath by this intimation, they sought to cast him headlong from the rock on which their city

was built; "but he passing through the midst of them, went his way."

Words have no meaning, if such a scene as this can be called the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy.

(m.) *The bruised reed and the smoking flax* (Isaiah xlii. 1; Matt. xii. 14-21). How could the "servant upheld by Jehovah" fulfil the prophecy by shrinking from the Pharisees in the way Jesus is reported by Matthew to have done?

(n.) "*Eyes to see, and see not; ears to hear, and hear not*" (Isa. vi. 9-12; xxix. 10; Jer. v. 21; Ezek. xii. 2; Matt. xiii. 10-17; John xii. 39-41; Acts xxviii. 24-28; Rom. xi. 8-10). The prophets prophesied to a heedless people. Jesus and his followers are reported to have done the same. So have many others at various times. The appropriation to Jesus of the language in which the Jewish prophets expressed their disappointment is no proof that that language was meant to apply to him rather than to themselves.

Hab. i. 5, 6; Acts xiii. 40, 41. Habakkuk and the bitter and hasty Chaldeans contrast strangely with Paul and his warning to the Jews not to disbelieve his assertions with reference to Jesus.

(o.) "*I will open my mouth in parables*" (Psalm lxxviii. 2; Matt. xiii. 34, 35). This is a very flagrant instance of misquotation and misapplication. The Psalmist says that he will utter dark sayings of old, "*which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.*" Jesus is described by Matthew as fulfilling a prophecy to the effect that he would utter things "*which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.*"

(p.) "*The stone rejected by the builders*" (Psalm cxviii.;22; Matt. xxi. 42, 43; Mark xii. 10; Luke xx. 17; Acts iv. 11). Psalm cxviii. is written by one who was praising the Lord for some triumph he had obtained over danger and difficulty; who had secured his end against his enemies, who had attained the head of the corner, though rejected by the builders. The application in Matthew is that Jesus, rejected by the Jews, should be accepted by the Gentiles, or by another nation than the Jews. This has come to pass. His own countrymen, even his own brethren, who were in a position to judge of the truth of his supernatural claims, rejected him. The nations of Europe, who were not in a position so to judge, have, under various forms, called themselves by his name, and adored him as their God. But this in no way shows that Psalm cxviii. was written with reference to any other than the person who composed it.

(q.) *The betrayal by Judas Iscariot* (Zech. xi. 11-13; Psalm lxix. 25; cix. 8; Matt. xxvii. 9, 10; Acts i. 16-20). Peter thus narrates the fate of Judas: "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of his iniquity (the thirty pieces of silver), and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known to all the dwellers in Jerusalem, insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Acedama, that is to say, the field of blood."

Compare this with Matthew, who states that Judas, repenting of his conduct, took back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests; said he had betrayed innocent blood; they answered, "What is that to us? see thou to that." On this he cast down the money in the temple, and went and hanged himself. The chief priests would not put the money in the treasury, because it was the price of blood, but laid it out in purchasing the potter's field to bury strangers in.

Matthew and Peter are thus quite irreconcilable. Both were companions of Jesus and Judas; both were present at and cognisant of the whole circumstances of the betrayal; Matthew was present during Peter's speech recorded in the Acts; and yet the discrepancy between them is such as entirely to discredit both their statements.

The circumstances alluded to in Zechariah are unknown. The passages from the Psalms are applicable to Saul, or some other of David's enemies; indeed, they may be used by any one against a traitor or enemy.

(r.) *The passion* (Zech. xiii. 7; Matt. xxvi. 31). Zechariah is writing during the troubled times, when Jerusalem was rebuilt. The particular event he alluded to is unknown. No construction of the passage can make it applicable to the desertion of the disciples when Jesus was arrested.

Deut. xxi. 23; Gal. iii. 13. Hanging on a tree is not crucifixion, which was a Roman, not a Jewish practice.

Exodus xii. 46; Psalms xxxiv. 20; John xix. 36. The passage in Exodus certainly refers to the Paschal lamb; the passage in the Psalms to the care the Almighty is said to take of the righteous, so that "preserving his bones whole" is equivalent to the other expression, "There shall no evil befall thee." The incident recorded by John is not confirmed by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who make no mention of the disciples at the crucifixion, and say that the women beheld afar off. John, on the contrary, says that he, along with the women, was by the cross, so near that Jesus spoke to himself and Mary. This incident, so pointedly given as an eye-witnessed fact, seems to have been devised to give the crucifixion some resemblance to the lamb of the Passover. But the modes of death surely were very different. If any such resemblance was necessary, should it not have been complete?

Zech. xii. 9; John xix. 37. The spirit of grace and supplication poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem during the crucifixion of Jesus, when they cried, "Not this man, but the robber Barabbas," is a wondrous contradiction.

Psalm xxij. 18; Matt. xxvii. 35; Mark xv. 24; Luke xxiii. 34; John xix. 23. The practice of casting lots for the clothes of the crucified may have been a common one among the Roman soldiers at the time, and it corresponds admirably to one of David's expressions when he was in adversity and trouble.

(s.) *Daniel's seventy weeks* (Daniel ix. 21-27). The only allusion in the New Testament to this prophecy is in Matt. xxiv. 14, 15; Mark xv. 13, 14, where Jesus directs his disciples to flee to the mountains when they see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand on the holy place. Between Nebuchadnezzar and Titus, however, there were two, if not more, "abominations of desolation," equally answering to Daniel's description.

So far as it relates to the Messiah, the Prince, or the Anointed Prince, it is not claimed for Jesus by any of the New Testament writers. But by modern Christians it is held to be a prophecy of the exact time that elapsed between the edict to restore Jerusalem and the death of Christ. Each week is said to be a week of years: thus seventy weeks are 490 years, and from the letter of Artaxerxes granted to Ezra (Ezra vii.), b.c. 457, to the death of Jesus, a.d. 33, there are exactly 490 years. What is this but a mere reckoning back of 490 years from a.d. 33, so that the chronology has been fixed by the prophecy, not the truth of the prophecy

proved by the chronology?

But the letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra was not a commandment to rebuild Jerusalem: it was given to him to further him on his way from Babylon to Jerusalem, *already rebuilt*. The commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was that of the first of Cyrus alone (ordinary Christian chronology, b.c. 536); the prophecy asserts that it went forth at the beginning of Daniel's supplication, and the subsequent decrees were only confirmations of the original one, (Ezra vi.)

The statement of Gabriel is in answer to Daniel's supplication for mercy and favour to be shown to Jerusalem, and, commencing with a commandment to rebuild, ends in doleful desolation. But as the Messiah, the anointed one referred to, is not asserted by New Testament writers to be Jesus, it is sufficient here to point out the untenable ground on which modern Christians make this claim on his behalf.

(t.) *The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah*. This chapter may most fairly be interpreted as having reference to Hezekiah in the various troubles of his reign and life, described 2 Kings xix. and xx.; 2 Chron. xxx. and xxxii., and Isaiah xxxvi., xxxvii., and xxxviii. Isaiah was the seer of the time. Hezekiah "cut off out of the land of the living" refers to the sentence of death, afterwards postponed, against him for his people's backsliding, though he himself wrought that which was "good, and right, and truth before the Lord his God." His "pouring out his soul unto death" agrees with the expression, "In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death." "And he was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors," also agree with, "And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people;" and with, "Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah." If the exact circumstances in which Isaiah liiii. was written were fully known, all the seer's allusions would be very intelligible; as it is, their application to Hezekiah and his times—always assuming that Isaiah was the writer—is the most probable.

The portions of this chapter claimed for Jesus in the New Testament are the following:—

Matthew viii. 16, 17. Here "his bearing our griefs" is applied by Matthew to Jesus' disease-curing wonders. But this differs from the view of modern Christians. They hold that it applies to his death on the cross as an expiation for sin.

John xii. 37, 38. "Who hath believed our report" may be used by any one whose pretensions are treated with incredulity. What reason is there for imagining that Esaias meant any other than his own report?

Mark xv. 27, 28; Luke xxii. 37. The "numbering among the transgressors" is equally true of any one who suffers penally for his belief, or who, innocent or little to blame himself, shares the fate of an offending community. The applicability of the passage to Hezekiah in the latter sense has just been noticed.

(u.) *The gospel message* (Luke xxiv. 44-48). Here a statement, utterly untrue, is put by Luke into the mouth of the risen Jesus. Nowhere in Moses, the prophets, or the Psalms is it written that the anointed one is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day.

(v.) *The gift of tongues* (Joel ii. 28-30; Acts ii. 1-4). Joel's prophecy is said to have been fulfilled on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection, when the apostles were all "with one accord in one place."

1. A sound came from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and filled the house where they were sitting.

2. Cloven tongues, like tongues of fire, sat on each of them.

3. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Joel, the son of Pethuel, would probably be surprised at Peter's appropriation of his prophecy. No doubt it is applicable to any general religious awakening or excitement in any land or at any time. But Joel is referring to some invasion, or threatened invasion, of Judea, and to a deliverance accompanied with a religious revival and thanksgiving. The exact circumstances in which he wrote, if known, would make his obscure allusions clear. The incidents, however, of the mighty rushing wind and the cloven fiery tongues receive no support from his prophecy.

(w.) *The calling of the Gentiles* (Amos ix. 11, 12; Acts xv. 13-16). Amos' prophecy has been falsified by the event. The Jews, who were no more to be pulled out of the land the Lord had given them, were pulled out of it eighteen centuries ago, and so remain. The disingenuous way in which James applies to the conversion of the Gentiles what is clearly a reference to a return from captivity is very striking.

## CHAPTER V. THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS

1. The resurrection of Jesus is the keystone of Christian faith, the central stay on which the structure rests. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." What a glorious hope for all mankind would lie in such a fact as that one, a fellow-man, had been killed because of his supernatural claims; had lain for a time in the grave, and on the third day, as predicted by himself, had risen from the dead! So marvellous an instance of nature-controlling power might well be held to establish, in the most conclusive manner, the validity of the claims of the person resuscitated; it would show that God was with him in an especial manner, that his words were true, that his promises would not fail.

2. What, then, are the evidences of this so glorious an event?

(a.) The four gospels agree in narrating that, while Jesus hung lifeless on the cross, a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, himself a disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate and obtained permission to take charge of the body; that he laid it in his own new tomb, hewn out of a rock; that certain women saw where the body was laid, and that

a great stone was rolled to the door of the tomb.

(b.) Matthew alone avers that, with Pilate's consent, the chief priests and Pharisees had the stone sealed, and a watch (of Roman soldiers) set.

(c.) Thus the tomb remained from the evening of the day of the crucifixion over the next day, the Jewish sabbath.

(d.) But early on the morning of the following day, the first day of the week, Jesus arose from the dead. Of this event—so entirely the reverse of all human experience, but of the last importance to each mortal man if it happened—the witnesses, of whose personal character among their neighbours for veracity and general trustworthiness nothing is known, thus present themselves:—

Matthew and John, eye-witnesses of the risen Jesus:

Mark, companion of Peter, an eye-witness:

Luke, companion of Paul, who had intercourse with eyewitnesses, and who himself professes to narrate the testimony of eye-witnesses (Luke i. 2):

And what they aver is analysed and compared in the following paragraphs:—

3. *The empty tomb.*—All four agree that in the morning (at dawn, at sun rising, very early, when it was yet dark) of the first day of the week the tomb was found empty by those who went to visit it.

4. *Visitors to the tomb.*—Matthew mentions "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary;" Mark, "Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome;" Luke, "Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other Galilean women," and afterwards, on the report of the women, Peter; John, "Mary Magdalene" only, and afterwards, on her report, himself (John) and Simon Peter, Mary Magdalene returning after them.

5. *Appearances at the tomb.*—(a.) The great earthquake and the awful appearance of the angel to the watch—"countenance like lightning, raiment white as snow;" and the effect on the startled soldiers, who swooned away "as dead men," as also the subsequent report of the watch and their acceptance of a bribe (large money) from the chief priests to publish a falsehood and confess that they—Roman soldiers—had slept at their post, are mentioned by Matthew alone. Matthew does not name his informant, whether it was a chief priest or one of the soldiers who betrayed his own and his comrades' infamy.

(b.) The stone securing the tomb was rolled away. So all four affirm. This was one object of the angel's visit. Jesus rose from the dead, but the angel's assistance was necessary to open the tomb.

(c.) Matthew asserts that the angel sat on the stone, outside the tomb. Mark, that he appeared as a young man sitting within the tomb, on the right side, clothed in a long, white garment. Luke has "two men" in glittering garments, who made themselves manifest as the perplexed women were gazing at the empty tomb. John states that Mary Magdalene, on her *second* visit, saw two angels, one sitting at the head the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. When, according to Luke, Peter visited the tomb, or according to John, when Mary Magdalene in the first instance, and then Peter and John, on hearing her report, went there, no such marvellous angelic being was manifest. The appearance was to perplexed and timid women. Wherein did they differ from other weak women, that their testimony received at second hand should be held trustworthy? Supposing, for instance, that it had been the young man with the linen garment about his naked body (Mark xiv. 51, 52), seated within the tomb, would not their excited imaginations have transformed him into a messenger from heaven?

6. *Announcements of the angels at the tomb.*—(a.) Matthew's dread angel announced to the women that Jesus had risen from the dead, directed them to go at once and inform his disciples that "he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him." Trembling and joyful they ran away at once to bring "his disciples word."

(6.) Mark's white-clad young man made the same announcement of Jesus preceding his disciples to Galilee; but instead of obeying the angel's direction as to informing the disciples, "they went out quickly and fled from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed, neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid."

(c.) Luke's two bright-clad men announced that Jesus was risen, as he had told them while yet in Galilee. "They remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest." There is no mention here of Jesus going before his disciples into Galilee.

(d.) John's two angels asked Mary Magdalene, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She replied, "Because they have taken away my lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Here, *wholly ignorant that he was alive*, stood beside the tomb one of the very women to whom Matthew, Mark, and Luke's angels announced that Jesus was risen from the dead. If Matthew's account be true, both he and John were present when the women told the disciples that Jesus was risen, and gave them the direction to go to Galilee; and yet John narrates this circumstance, one quite at variance with Matthew's angel's announcement to the women.

7. *Effect on the disciples of the first announcement of the resurrection.*—(a.) Matthew states that "then" (on the report of the women) "the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them."

(b.) Mark xvi. 1-8, and xvi. 9-20, seem to contain two different accounts of the resurrection. It is difficult to reconcile them. Verses 9-20, not being found in the most ancient manuscripts, are held by many to be spurious. But their general agreement with Luke's narrative is in favour of these verses being of the same age, or emanating from the same set of believers. Let verses 1-8, then, for the present purpose, be distinguished as Mark's first narrative, and verses 9-20 as Mark's second narrative.

Mark's first narrative, as already shown, agrees with Matthew as to the terms of the angel's announcement, but seems to imply that the terror-struck women did not deliver the angel's message to the disciples.

Mark's second narrative states that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, who went and told the disciples; "and they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not." No departure for Galilee is mentioned.

(c.) Luke affirms that the announcement to the disciples was by the whole of the women; "and their words

seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." Peter alone was moved to run to the sepulchre, where he found the empty tomb and the cast-off grave-clothes, and "departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." The whole of Luke's statement is quite inconsistent with Matthew's assertion that the disciples went away to Galilee to find Jesus there.

(d.) John states that when Mary Magdalene first reported that the tomb was empty, Peter and himself ran to the sepulchre, that he outran Peter, that he looked in and saw the linen clothes lying, that Peter when he came up went in, that then he (John) went in also, and that when he saw the cast-off grave-clothes he saw and believed: "for as yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise from the dead." If so then Matthew xvi. 21; xvii. 22, 23; Mark viii. 31; ix. 31; Luke ix. 22, must all be erroneous. The burden of these passages is, that while in Galilee Jesus informed his disciples that he would be killed, and rise again on the third day. The very chief priests, too, in setting the watch (Matthew xxvii. 63), did so because of this well-known assertion of Jesus.

When, on her second visit to the tomb, Mary Magdalene saw and conversed with Jesus himself, she "came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her." The effect is not mentioned. But the whole of John's statement is inconsistent with Matthew's "departure of the eleven for Galilee," and this departure again as inconsistent with John's statement.

8. *Appearances of the risen Jesus.*—(a.) Matthew xxviii. 9, 10. While Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were running to deliver the angel's message to the disciples, they were met by Jesus himself, who greeted them with an "all hail." They held him by the feet and worshipped him. He confirmed the angel's message to his disciples, and directed them to go to Galilee: "there shall they see me."

Mark xvi. 9-11. Jesus, when he had risen early the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. She informed his mourning disciples, who did not believe her. Luke has no incident at all corresponding to this.

John xx. 14-18. Mary Magdalene remained weeping at the tomb, after Peter and John had left, when Jesus made himself known to her. Recognising him, she turned and called him, "Master." He said, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her."

Here there are several grave contradictions between Matthew and John.

1. Matthew makes the first appearance of Jesus to *the two* Maries, while they are hastening *from the tomb* to carry to his disciples the glad news of his resurrection, which they had learned from the angel; John, while Mary Magdalene is *by herself at the tomb and is unaware* of his resurrection.

2. Matthew mentions that the two Maries *held him by the feet* and worshipped him; John, that Mary Magdalene was commanded by Jesus *not to touch him*.

3. Matthew states that Jesus directed his disciples to go to

Galilee, where they would find him; John, that he announced to Mary, "I ascend to my Father," &c. Not one word of a journey to Galilee.

(6.) Matthew xxviii. 16-20. "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," &c.

Matthew here narrates that on receiving the direction of the women, the eleven went away to a mountain in Galilee fixed on before Jesus' death. (Matthew xxvi. 32, he had said, "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.") How or in what form they saw him there is left untold. Most of them adored, but some doubted. The appearance, therefore, could not have been a close one, such as was vouchsafed to Thomas (John xx. 27), for then no one could have doubted. Belief in such cases is not matter of choice. How Jesus vanished after his appearance on the Galilean mount is not mentioned. Matthew was a witness of the ascension of Jesus, if Mark and Luke's accounts be true, but he passes by this most striking event in silence. Mark's second narrative, too, in no way confirms the journey to Galilee. On the contrary, it states that the parting charge of Jesus and his ascension took place after he had appeared and spoken to the eleven as they sat at meat. Where this occurred, and on what day, is somewhat ambiguous; but the inference is that it was at Jerusalem, and on the day of the resurrection. Luke, however, is quite explicit on this point. According to him on the very day (Luke xxiv. 13, 33, 36, 50, 51) of the resurrection Jesus appeared to the eleven at Jerusalem, gave them his parting charge, led them out to Bethany, and was there parted from them and carried into heaven. So far from there being any journey to Galilee, they were expressly commanded (chap. xxiv. 49) to tarry at Jerusalem. Here Luke, the recorder of the reports of eye-witnesses, states that the disciples were ordered to tarry in Jerusalem on the very day when, according to Matthew, an eye-witness, they were ordered to proceed to Galilee. And John, the other eyewitness, one of the eleven, makes no mention of a journey to Galilee immediately following the first announcement of the resurrection, or of the appearance of Jesus on the mountain there, but, on the contrary, affirms that Jesus appeared to his disciples at Jerusalem on the evening of the day of the resurrection, and also on that day week.

(c.) Mark xvi. 12, 13. He appeared in another form to two of them in a country walk: they told the rest, who were still incredulous.

Luke xxiv. 13-35. Jesus that same day, i.e., the day of the resurrection, joined two of them on their way to the village of Emmaus, near Jerusalem; at first they did not know him, but on breaking bread they recognised him. On this he vanished.

John does not confirm these appearances, and they are inconsistent with Matthew's journey of the eleven to Galilee.

(d.) Mark xvi. 14-20. Then he appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, reproached them with their unbelief, gave them the charge to preach the gospel; and then, after he had spoken, he was received into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Luke xxiv. 36-53. *The same hour* in which the two, who had recognised Jesus in breaking of bread at

Emmaus, returned to Jerusalem, and while they were informing the "eleven and the rest" of what had happened, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you." They were terrified at his appearance. He showed them his hands and his feet, told them to handle him, and ate before them; directed them to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high. "And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

John xx. 19-23. The same day (i.e., the resurrection day), at even, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus appeared, saying, "Peace be unto you." He showed them his hands and his side. They were glad of his appearance.

Here there is a certain amount of agreement between Mark, Luke, and John, as to an appearance to the eleven at Jerusalem on the day of the resurrection. But this occurrence conflicts with Matthew. If, as he states, Jesus "went before" his disciples to Galilee, or if they set out for Galilee on the direction delivered by the women, neither the one nor the others could have been in Jerusalem.

The most remarkable point here, however, is that neither Matthew nor John confirm, in any form, the "ascension" mentioned by Mark and Luke. Eye-witnesses as they were, special missionaries to testify to men that Jesus was alive, so wondrous an event they pass by in silence.

(e.) John xx. 24-29. On the eighth day after the previous occurrence, he appeared among his disciples, the doors being shut as before, and was acknowledged by Thomas, who was not present on the first occasion, as his "Lord and his God." This is quite at variance with Mark and Luke's statement that Jesus ascended to heaven on the day of the resurrection, and it is unnecessary again to allude to its inconsistency with Matthew's account.

(f.) John xxi. 1-25. Jesus' *third appearance* to his disciples was at the sea of Tiberias while they were fishing. Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, and two other disciples were present. He directed Peter how to cast his net, and ensured a large haul: he then dined with them, and afterwards gave Peter a charge to feed his lambs and his sheep, and returned a dubious answer about the length of John's life.

This also rests merely on John's narrative. Mark, even, the companion of Peter, who was specially conspicuous on this occasion, in no way confirms it. On the contrary, his second narrative implies that Jesus ascended to heaven on the day of the resurrection.

(g.) Luke in Acts i. 1-11. Jesus showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs: was seen by his disciples forty days, and spoke to them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await there the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then, on Mount Olivet, when he had given the last charge, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. As they were gazing upwards, two men in white apparel appeared, who said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Matthew and John, the two eye-witnesses, are silent as to the ascension to heaven. They, whose special, divinely-conferred mission it was to testify to the resurrection of Jesus and the following glory, to maintain that he was alive for evermore, to declare the whole counsel of God, make no mention of this crowning wonder. Such comparatively trifling matters as the women holding him by the feet (Matt. xxviii. 9), or Simon's naked condition (John xxi. 7), or the fire of coals, and fish laid thereon and bread (John xxi. 9), were deemed worthy of record, but the ascension to heaven they altogether ignore.

Mark and Luke, who write what they heard from others, mention the ascension in their Gospels, and their narrative most clearly implies that it took place on the day of the resurrection. Mark expressly states that he was received into heaven, "then after he had spoken" to the eleven as they sat at meat. And could any one imagine that between Luke xxiv. 49 and xxi v. 50 there was an interval of forty days, as asserted by the same writer in the Acts? Would the omission of all mention of such an interval be consistent with the "perfect understanding of all things from the very first" professed by Luke? Clearly there had been an amplification of detail during the time that elapsed between the compilation of the gospel by Luke and the compilation of the Acts.

Jesus, the writer in the Acts affirms, was seen by his disciples forty days, and spoke to them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Why, then, are none of his sayings preserved, if the short announcements (one of which—Luke xxiv. 44-48—has already been shown to be false) at the end of the gospels be excepted? Were the discourses of the risen Jesus not more important, were they less impressive than those uttered in his lifetime?

(h.) Acts ix. 1-9. As Paul was on the way to Damascus, with authority from the high priests to the synagogues there, to arrest and to bring to Jerusalem all who professed to believe on Jesus, a brilliant light shone around him, whereupon he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Paul replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" The voice answered, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." "And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." On getting up he found himself blind, and was led by the hand to Damascus. The men who were with him stood speechless. *They heard a voice*, but they saw no man.

Acts xxii. 6-21. This passage contains an address said to have been delivered by Paul himself, in which the foregoing wondrous event is related, but with one important contradiction,—*"They that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."*

Acts xxvi. 15-18. Paul here asserted that the voice from heaven uttered the following:—"I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. But rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared to thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness," &c. This is very different from Acts ix., where he is directed to go into the city, and that there it would be told him what he should do. Paul (Acts xxvi. 19-20) added, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but showed first unto them at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles," &c.

These are Luke's statements, in the Acts, with reference to the appearance of Jesus to Paul. The subsequent

movements of the apostle, on the same authority, were,—

(Luke, 1.) After being cured of his blindness by the laying on of the hands of Ananias, he preached in Damascus that Jesus was Christ.

(Luke, 2.) The Jews being desirous of killing him, he fled to Jerusalem. The disciples at first were chary of their quondam persecutor, but, assured by Barnabas, who took him and brought him to the apostles, they received him into their fellowship.

(Luke, 3.) He disputed against the Grecians (Hellenised Jews?), who went about to slay him. On this he was taken by the brethren to Caesarea, and thence sent on to Tarsus.

(Luke, 4.) Persecution forced many Christian Jews to leave Judea and to settle at Antioch. Barnabas was sent by the Church at Jerusalem to visit them. He rejoiced at their liveliness in the faith, and then went to Tarsus to find Paul, whom he brought back to Antioch. They were there together a whole year. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

(Luke, 5.) Paul and Barnabas conveyed a contribution from the brethren at Antioch to those at Jerusalem. Returning from Jerusalem they took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

(Luke, 6.) During their ministry at Antioch the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." They then started on their mission to the Gentiles.

Now, Luke was Paul's companion, his attendant on his travels, his faithful friend in trouble (2 Tim. iv. 11), surely, then, his statements with reference to Paul will be found to tally exactly with this apostle's allusions to his own life and ministry; it cannot be but that the Acts and the Epistles of Paul are in perfect harmony. Not so, however; they are quite irreconcilable.

(Paul, 1.) In 2 Cor. xi. and xii. Paul brings forward the various claims he possessed to be regarded as "no whit behind the very chiefest apostles." He alludes to his arduous labours, journeys, and sufferings for the gospel's sake. And then he comes "to visions and revelations of the Lord." Does he mention the wondrous incident on the way to Damascus? No! not one word, either here or elsewhere. What he does mention is a man in Christ (evidently himself), who, about fourteen years previously, was caught up into the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body, God only knew—caught up into paradise, and there heard unspeakable words, unutterable by man. Now, here, in discoursing of his very claim to apostleship, he is silent on what in the Acts is so strongly put forth as his miraculous calling to that office. The incident in which the risen Jesus announced, "I have appeared to thee for this purpose to make thee a minister and witness," &c., is quite ignored by Paul himself in particularising his claims to be that minister and witness. The necessary conclusion is, that when the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written, the marvel related in Acts ix., xxii., and xxvi. had not been thought of. By comparison with Paul's epistles this undoubted instance of invention or appropriation can be brought home to the writer of the Acts. It shows what the compilers of the New Testament were capable of, when a supernatural event was required to give sanction and support to any doctrine, or practice, or claim which they advocated. The object, in the present instance, was to place Paul, as an apostle, on an equal footing in every respect with the apostles who were companions of Jesus himself, and who had seen him alive after his resurrection. If the New Testament is read in the light which this incident affords, its various narratives become abundantly clear. It is seen that its authoritative claims and its doctrines, with reference to the destiny of man, so far from being based on the supernatural events recorded, are merely what these events were devised to establish and enforce.

(Paul, 2.) In Galatians he states that, "when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles"—(This style of writing seems quite inconsistent with such an appearance of Jesus himself as is mentioned in the Acts: Paul here uses language descriptive of ordinary conversion, radically different from the effect of a vision of the risen Son of God with power-conferring commands),—"immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them who were apostles before me (Luke, par. 2 above, expressly affirms that he did go to Jerusalem), but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus" (quite irreconcilable with Luke, pars. 1, 2, 3, and 4, above). "Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother. Now, the things which I write unto you, behold, before God I lie not." (If he does not lie, what can be said of Barnabas [Luke, par. 2 above] taking and bringing him to the apostles, or of the journey [Luke, par. 5 above] of Paul and Barnabas to convey relief to the famine-threatened brethren who dwelt in Judea.) "Afterwards I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but they had heard only that he who persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me." Compare this with Acts ix. 28—Luke, par. 2 above—"And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem;" with the famine-relief embassy of himself and Barnabas; and, more startling still, with the declaration in the Acts before king Agrippa,—"O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but showed first to them at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles" &c.

It is quite beyond the scope of this inquiry to enter into conjectures as to the cause of such serious discrepancies between the two fellow-travellers, the apostle and his faithful follower. And, indeed, all such conjectures would be "vain and unprofitable," for there are no means now of determining the question. What stands forth clear, however, is, that no conscience-satisfying belief, or even ordinary historical probability, can rest where such conflict of testimony appears.

(i.) In 1 Cor. xv. 4-8, Paul thus gives in detail the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection as these had been reported to him:—

(1.) That he was seen of Cephas. Where? Luke mentions an appearance to Peter (chap. xxiv. 34), but gives no particulars. Mark and John agree that the first appearance was to Mary Magdalene. No separate appearance to Peter is mentioned by them or by Matthew.

(2.) Then of the twelve. Where? In, the Galilean mount, according to Matthew, or at Jerusalem, according to Luke and John?

(3.) After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto

this present, but some are fallen asleep.

It is most remarkable that Matthew and John make no mention of this. Nor Mark nor Luke either.

(4.) After that he was seen of James. No one but Paul says so. Doubtless, however, as Peter claimed a special visit of the risen Jesus for himself, so did James, and Paul followed their example; for,

(5.) After mentioning that Jesus was next seen of all the apostles,—he does not mention where or when—he states,

(6.) "Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Also 1 Cor. ix. 1, "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" How or where he saw him he leaves untold. Comparing this, however, with 2 Cor. xii, it is probable that he refers to the time when he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, unutterable by man. It has already been shown that the appearance on the way to Damascus had not been thought of when the second epistle was written, and during this appearance Paul *did not see* Jesus. He heard a voice, and saw a brilliant light. But there is nothing in Paul's writings to indicate that he ever laid claim to so dread an event in connection with himself.

9. Can the mind, then, eagerly straining to find in these accounts of the resurrection of Jesus grounds for a sincere belief that "one has risen from the dead;" raising no question as to the authenticity of the gospels, but taking them as they are, and putting the fairest construction on the words and narrative; most desirous not to abandon a hope cherished from the lessons of youth, a hope twined with the fondest reflections of manhood,—can the mind once aroused to doubt and inquiry, so straining, descry aught on which to rest? Far otherwise; for how rapidly these tales of the resurrection, and the other supernatural occurrences claimed for Jesus, crumble away, like a long-buried corpse exposed to light, before the touch of the simplest tests of evidence!

10. It remains to consider the resurrection of Jesus in connection with Old Testament ideas, and with those of the surrounding Gentile nations.

11. In Genesis Adam was doomed to "return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." He died when he had lived so many years, is the brief record of his death, and of that of all the other primeval patriarchs, with the single exception of Enoch, who "walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." The writer of the Hebrews states that he was translated that he should not see death. He is thus represented as escaping the curse of Adam, and as made immortal, contrary to the common doom. The statement in Genesis is so loose, however, that the exact meaning of the writer will ever remain uncertain. The deaths of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are referred to thus: "that they gave up the ghost, full of years, and were gathered unto their people." They returned to the dust from whence they came, as their fathers before them. And when Joseph died, "being 110 years old," he is not "gathered unto his people," but "embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt."

12. In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, the books that immediately concern Moses, there is no mention of any future state of existence. The precepts, the ritual, the rewards, and the punishments all have reference to the present life. Beyond the grave is nothingness: no hope, no fear. What a startling fact this is, and how intimately it concerns the subject now under consideration, appears when contrasted with the prevailing contemporary Egyptian belief. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. They had been there upwards of two centuries. He himself was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He had been brought up as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Now, the most prominent belief of the Egyptian religion, as shown by the monuments and ritual, was the immortality of the soul and a state of existence beyond the grave, and it must have been vividly before the Israelites during their sojourn in Egypt. The god Osiris became incarnate on earth, worked all manner of good for mankind; was slain through the malignity of the evil one, the serpent Typhon, but rose again from the dead, and was made the 'judge of souls; the disembodied spirits were weighed in his balances; the just, after expiating their venial sins by many severe trials, in which they were accompanied and sustained by Osiris, who had himself passed through the same ordeal—"been tempted in all points like as they were"—shared the bliss of the god; the reprobate were condemned to lengthened torments, came back to earth as evil spirits, dwelt in the bodies of unclean animals, and were ultimately to be annihilated. In addition, also, to the symbolic idolatrous religion, by which the deity was represented to the people in numerous phases, all probably conceptions of natural phenomena, however incongruous most of the manifestations now appear, there was the hidden religion of the priests and of the initiated; and the main conception of this hidden religion was of the one living, independent, uncreated god—*Nuk pu Nuk*, "I am that I am." A hereditary priesthood, animal sacrifices, circumcision, and abstinence from swine's flesh, were likewise Egyptian institutions. So was the seventh-day rest. These and minor practices were continued among the Israelites, and the Egyptian *Nuk pa Nuk* became the Jewish Jehovah; but the symbolical idolatrous worship, likening the Creator to the creature, and the belief in the immortality of the soul, were rejected by Moses. They have no place in his system. The former he denounced, the latter he ignored. His conception of the unity and omnipotence of God was intense, and he indelibly stamped this belief on the mind of his nation, shunning the example of the priests of Egypt, who encouraged the people in idolatrous polytheistic rites, while the purer faith remained concealed among themselves. Contrary to the practice of all priestcraft, ancient and modern, he did not keep his followers in ignorance, that he himself might, by a superior understanding, retain an exalted position in their sight, but he sought to bring them up to the level of his own knowledge and belief. How far many of the Egyptian practices retained by the Israelites, and some of the more unworthy conceptions of the deity—such, for instance, as the ever-living omnipotent God *working* six days in creating the world, and *resting* the seventh; or his ordering the enemies of Israel to be massacred, man, woman, and child; or his exacting animal sacrifices, as if he, the source of life, could be appeased by the destruction of the very life he had brought into being—were forced by the nation upon Moses, rather than by Moses upon the nation, cannot now be ascertained. Jer. vii. 22, 23, seem to indicate that the animal sacrifices, at least, were not of Mosaic origin. But his stern prohibition of idolatry, and his ignoring a future life, constituted the principal differences between the Mosaic and the Egyptian systems. They were, indeed, radical differences. Had not Moses seen in Egypt how the pretended immortality of the soul, and the several connected doctrines and practices, in the hands of a polished priesthood, had been used so as to keep that very soul in this world in a state of vague fear and abject superstition: how the terrors or expectation of the life to come had led to misery and misdirection of the life on earth: how the dead had been cared for to the



neglect of the living? And was there any good ground for this expectation of a future life? On the contrary, was not man, in his view, doomed to return to the dust whence he came? Was not the pretence of the soul being immortal an assumption of an attribute of the eternal Jehovah? And so he taught "that the Lord he is God, in heaven above, and in the earth beneath; there is none else. Thou shalt therefore keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever" (Deut. iv. 39, 40). The rules of conduct were those which, in the judgment of Moses, led to long life and earthly prosperity; their neglect would inevitably bring disaster and woe; there was no other reward, no other dread. And in Psalm xc, described as "a prayer of Moses, the man of God," when he mentions that the days of our years are threescore and ten, or if, perchance, by reason of strength, fourscore, yet "that strength labour and sorrow," so far is he from arriving at Paul's conclusion—"What advantageth it me if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"—that he makes the brevity of man's life the ground of the petition, "So-teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Let us be up and doing, for our own and our brethren's sakes; there is no time to be lost; let us strive and ponder how to pass our brief life on earth wisely and well. The dead, moreover, were buried out of sight, and any bodily disfigurement (Lev. xix. 28; Deut. xiv. 1) or offerings (Deut. xxvi. 14) for them were prohibited.

13. Now, if the Jewish Jehovah thus represented by Moses be one and the same being with "the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus," whose kingdom was not of this world, whose reward was eternal life, whose followers were of all men the most miserable if in this life only they had hope in Christ, then the Almighty in one dispensation left his chosen people to ignore the possession of an immortal soul and the hope of eternal life—doctrines fully known and recognised by the Egyptians and other nations surrounding them—but in the other revealed, little modified, as his own, these prevailing beliefs of the heathen nations, thus making Christianity practically little else than the Mosaic religion without the sacrifices, joined to the Egyptian belief in the soul's immortality and a state of future rewards and punishments, which Moses rejected; in one dispensation he placed his service in the following of those rules of life which lead to making the best of the good earth on which men live, without any other reward; in the other, "he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal," and those are denounced "who mind earthly things, for our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." A wondrous contradictory Almighty!

14. In the historical books of the Old Testament, from Joshua to Esther, there is nothing to indicate that a belief in a future life was held by any of the representatives of Jehovah, whether judge, king, prophet, or priest, (a.) The aged Joshua (Josh. xxiii. 14) and the dying David (1 Kings ii. 2) affirm that they are about "to go the way of all the earth." They express neither hope of heaven nor fear of hell. The writer in Judges (ii 10) states, "all that generation was gathered unto their fathers." The kings of Israel and Judah all "slept with their fathers." (b.) The Godforsaken Saul (1 Sam. xxviii. 7-25) went to inquire of the witch of Endor, and asked her to bring up Samuel, who appeared (visible, as the narrative implies, only to the witch) as an old man covered with a mantle—that is to say, his shade had the appearance of himself in old age, *dress and all*—and said, "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up." Saul told his extremity. Samuel's wraith affirmed that the kingdom was transferred to David, that Saul's army would be defeated by the Philistines, and that "to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me." The God-favoured Samuel and the God-forsaken Saul *would be together*. Here is certainly a belief in a future life, and in the power of a witch to bring up to earth a soul *at rest*—not in bliss or in misery, if Samuel's "why hast thou thus disquieted me" may be so construed; but that it was not an orthodox Jewish belief is made clear by 1 Chron. x. 13: "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it, and inquired not of the Lord: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom to David, the son of Jesse." (c.) The wise woman of Tekoah, whom Joab sent disguised to king David, expressed the recognised belief when she said, "for we must needs die, and are as water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." (d.) Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 21, 22) raised from the dead the son of the widow of Zarephath, and Elisha (2 Kings iv. 32-35) the son of the Shunammite. "Elisha went up and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm." Elijah, too, stretched himself on the child three times, and he prayed, "O Lord my God, let this child's soul (or life, same word as Genesis i. 30) come into him again; and the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul (or life) of the child came into him again, and he revived." It would be hard from these statements to determine whether Elijah and Elisha considered the child's soul or life as merely the action of an organism, or as so much vital force existing only *as force* outside the body, or as a separate conscious soul sent back to earth at their request. Most probably neither they nor the narrator of their wonder-working had any definite opinion on the subject. Elisha's bones, also, had such virtue that when a dead man let down into his sepulchre (2 Kings xiii. 21) had touched them, he revived and stood up on his feet. It is strange that the bones could not do so much for themselves. Neither this man, however, nor the resuscitated children, appear to have been made immortal on earth, any more than the son of the widow of Nain, or the raised Lazarus of the New Testament. So, wretched ones, they had to suffer death twice; and when they were brought back to life, what did they tell their wondering friends of the condition of the disembodied soul? The world has been none the wiser of their revisit, (e.) The marvellous departure of Elijah (2 Kings ii. 11) was probably told to prevent any sort of worship at his tomb, concealed, in all likelihood, as that of Moses, doubtless at his own desire, was.

15. The authorised version gives rise to considerable misapprehension by translating the Hebrew word "sheol" as "hell" in some places, and "the grave" in others, (a.) The passage (Genesis xxxvii. 35) before referred to, where Jacob says, "I will go down into the grave (sheol) unto my son mourning," if translated, "I will go down into hell," &c, would have conveyed to the mind of a modern Christian that Joseph was in the place of torment. It was quite necessary here, therefore, to render the word "the grave." Genesis xlii. 38 is, similarly treated, (b) Proverbs xxiii. 13, 14, is an example of the other rendering of the same word: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" (from sheol). Here nothing more is meant than that by coercing a youth to follow the lessons of experience, he would be saved from an early grave; but by translating sheol

"hell," the notion that "eternal woe" is to be averted by the unsparring use of the rod is erroneously implied, (c.) The Hebrew word *kibr* is usually employed to designate a specific burying-place (a grave, as distinguished from *the* grave), as in Genesis xxiii. 42; xxxv. 20, but is sometimes also used in the same sense as *sheol*, as Psalm vi. 5, "In the grave (*sheol*) who shall give thee thanks:" Psalm lxxxviii. 10, "Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave" (*kibr*)? *Sheol*, however, almost invariably means more than a mere burial place: sometimes it is used in the sense of the "power of death" (Isaiah xiv. 9), sometimes of the unfathomable abyss of darkness, erroneously believed in those days to be under the earth (Psalm cxxxix. 8; Amos ix. 2); but usually it implies *the state that follows death*; and that this state was held to be one of ended existence, non-existence, or nothingness, is as clear a conclusion as words can convey. The reprieved Hezekiah (Isaiah xxxviii. 18) says, "For the grave (*sheol*) cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." So Psalm cxv. 17, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence;" and Eccles. ix. 5, "For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything;" also ix. 10, "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave (*sheol*), whither thou goest." Job, too (vii. 9), "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave (*sheol*) shall come up no more." Psalm xlix. 12, "Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish." Thus also Eccles. iii. 19, "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other: yea, they have all one breath" (i.e. same word as translated "spirit" in verse 21, and chap. xii. 7); "so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. (20) All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (21) Who knoweth the spirit (or breath) of man that goeth upward, and the spirit (or breath) of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" Is this last verse an answer to any objection taken to what is stated in verse 19, that man and beast have all one spirit (breath)? Again, Eccles. xii. 7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." This passage is quite conclusive against a separate conscious existence of the soul in any one place set apart for its reception, or of one soul going to one place and another to another. Man is dissolved into dust and spirit: the dust mingles again with the earth; the spirit in like manner, as spirit, returns to God: in other words, the life as life returns to its source. Such seems the idea. Again, the mercy of Jehovah is shown in consideration of the brief span of man's life, as Psalm lxxviii. 39, "For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away and cometh not again:" ciii. 14, "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust;" and Psalm lxxxvii. 5 mentions the "slain that lie in the grave (*kibr*), whom thou (Jehovah) rememberest no more." How utterly opposed are all these clear statements to the paradise of unspeakable bliss, and the hell of unutterable woe, and the immortal soul and the bodily resurrection of the New Testament.

16. Yet there are a few verses of the Old Testament, the principal Job xix. 25-27; Isaiah xxvi. 19; Ezek. xxxvii. 12, 13; Daniel xii. 2, that, as translated in the authorised version, seem to express the hope of a bodily resurrection. All these passages are of a highly poetical character (that of Daniel is in connection with the great Jewish prince Michael), and if read in the light of the explicit declarations just quoted, it will be felt that they must be open to other constructions, and probably to other renderings than those in the present translation. But it is no part of the present purpose to reconcile discrepancies, apparent or real; and in any case, it is clear that even these last-named passages do not countenance such conceptions as the heaven and hell of the New Testament. The Christian clergy, fully alive to the importance, for upholding the divine origin which they claim for their creed, of making New Testament ideas a development and fulfilment of the Old, and of showing that the deities, Mosaic and Christian, are the same, and not contradictory, have displayed much ingenuity in reconciling incongruities and in discovering resemblances in ways and by reasonings that would not have occurred to ordinary truth-seeking men; but no unbiassed inquirer can fail to perceive the utter divergence between the Old and New Testament doctrine and practice, as regards a future life, and how impossible it is that both sets of ideas can have emanated from the same mind or spirit, mortal or immortal. There are thus only three possible conclusions: (1.) The Mosaic deity is the true God, not the Christian; (2.) the Christian deity is the true God, not the Mosaic; but this contradicts the Christian deity himself, who says the Mosaic deity was himself; or, (3.) neither is God, in which case there has been no revelation, and all that is left for men is either to assume the existence and attributes of a God who has never revealed himself, or to disbelieve in such existence; or to acknowledge that the question of the existence of a God is one beyond the reach of the human faculties to determine.

17. If then the resurrection of Jesus and the New Testament declarations as to a future life, are thus wholly opposed to Old Testament ideas, do they present any resemblance to the belief of heathendom?

(a.) The faith and practice of the Egyptians, in connection with their god Osiris, have already been referred to in preceding paragraph 12. It has been well said that the ancient Egyptians, in their vivid anticipations of the life to come, lived rather in the next world than on the banks of the Nile. The bodily resurrection also had a place in their system. The belief in the deathlessness of souls has been a marked characteristic of all the Turanian races, whether represented, as many hold, by the Egyptians, Etruscans, and Lydians of old, or by the Chinese, Mongols, and Finns of the present day. The Etruscan sepulchral paintings represent the disembodied souls on their way to the land of spirits. Some are calm and resigned, with rods in their hands: some full of horror and dismay: attendant spirits, good and evil, contend for their possession; the good spirits are coloured red, the evil spirits black; the heads of the latter are wreathed with serpents, and they bear in their hands a hammer or mallet, which is sometimes raised as in the act of striking the woe-begone soul on the knee vainly imploring mercy, (b.) In the Zend-a-Vesta,—the ancient Persian Scriptures,—a narrow passage, called "the bridge of the gatherer," is said to be extended over the middle of hell, where the souls of the dead are assembled on the day after the third night from their decease. The wicked fall into the gulf beneath, the gloomy kingdom of Ahriman, and are doomed to feed upon poisoned food. The good, sustained by benign angels and spirits and the prayers of surviving friends, cross over in safety, and are greeted on the other side by the archangel, as having passed from mortality to immortality. Thence they rise to paradise, where Ormuzd and his six holy ones sit on golden thrones, and at once join in the conflict against Ahriman and the powers of darkness. At the last day they will share the glory of the triumph of Ormuzd, when Ahriman and his angels, finally routed and overcome, will be driven into their native darkness, and virtue, harmony, and bliss will evermore prevail in the universe. The resurrection of the body is also contained in the Zend-a-

Vesta, and it likewise forms part of the creed of the Magi. (c.) Of the sects into which the Jews were divided after the return from the captivity in Babylon, the writer of the Acts states: "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both:" and Josephus writes concerning the latter, "They believe that souls have an immortal vigour in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive, and live again." Elsewhere he shows that these beliefs were traditional merely: "What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory, which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the traditions of our fore-fathers."

18. The belief of classical antiquity as to the condition of souls after death, is beautifully summed up by Horace in the Ode (i. 10) to Mercury, date about b.c. 24; "Grateful alike to the gods supernal and infernal, it is thine to place pious souls in blissful abodes, and to coerce the airy crowd with thy golden wand." Homer, indeed, whose poems are certainly prior to the eighth century b.c., has no Elysian fields in the land of spirits; all is indeterminate, gloomy, uncomfortable. The shade of Achilles says:

*"Talk not of ruling in this dolorous gloom,  
Nor think vain words (he cried) can ease my doom;  
Rather I'd choose laboriously to bear  
A weight of woes and breathe the vital air,  
A slave to some poor hind that toils for bread,  
Than reign the sceptred monarch of the dead."*

But, whether from contact with the East and Egypt or otherwise, more definite conceptions of the abode of disembodied spirits were afterwards formed, which have found best expression in Virgil's *Æneid*, written about B.C. 20. There

*"The gates of hell are open night and day,  
Smooth the descent, and easy is the way;"*

just as in the sermon on the mount,—*"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."*

At a certain point hell is thus divided:

*"The right to Pluto's golden palace guides;  
The left to that unhappy region tends  
Which to the depths of Tartarus descends."*

So in the New Testament, the sheep (the saved) are on the right, the goats (the lost) on the left hand of the Son of man sitting on the throne of his glory.

The region to the left is thus described:

*"These are the realms of unrelenting fate,  
And awful Rhadamanthus rules the state;  
He hears and judges each committed crime,  
Inquires into the manner, place, and time:  
The conscious wretch must all his acts reveal  
(Loth to confess, unable to conceal)  
From the first moment of his vital breath  
To his last hour of unrepenting death.  
Straight o'er the guilty wretch the Fury shakes  
The sounding whip, and brandishes her snakes,  
And the pale sinner, with her sisters, takes.  
All these within the dungeon's depth remain,  
Despairing pardon, and expecting pain."*

Far other the region to the right:

*"These holy rites performed, they took their way  
Where long-extended fields of pleasure lay;  
The verdant fields with those of heaven may vie,  
With ether vested and a purple sky,  
The blissful seats of happy souls below,  
Stars of their own, and their own suns they know."*

19. Plutarch (about a.d. 90), referring to the tradition of the mysterious disappearance of Romulus and the suspicions of regicide aroused against the patricians, wrote,—*"While things were in this disorder, a senator, we are told, of great distinction, and famed for sanctity of manners, Julius Proculus by name, who came from Alba with Romulus, and had been his faithful friend, went into the Forum, and declared, upon the most solemn oaths, before all the people, that as he was travelling on the road, Romulus met him in a form more noble and august than ever, and clad in bright and dazzling armour. Astonished at the sight, he said to him, 'For what misbehaviour of ours, O king, or by what accident, have you so untimely left us to labour under the heaviest calumnies, and the whole city to sink under inexpressible sorrow?' To which he answered, 'It pleased the gods, my good Proculus, that we should dwell with men for a time; and after having founded a city which will be the most powerful and glorious in the world, return to heaven, from whence we came. Farewell, then, and go, tell the Romans that by the exercise of temperance and fortitude they shall attain the highest pitch of human greatness; and I, the god Quirinus, will ever be propitious to you.'* This, by the character and oath of the relater, gained credit with the Romans, who were caught with the enthusiasm, as if they had been actually inspired; and far from contradicting what they had heard, bade adieu to all their suspicions of the nobility, united in the deifying of Quirinus, and addressed their devotions to him. This is very like the Grecian fables concerning Aristeas, the Proconnesian, and Cleoraedes, the Astypalesian. For Aristeas, as they tell us, expired in a fuller's shop; and when his friends came to take away the body, it could not be found. Soon after, some persons coming in from a journey, said they met Aristeas travelling towards Croton. As for Cleomedes,

their account of him is that he was a man of gigantic size and strength; but behaving in a foolish and frantic manner, he was guilty of many acts of violence. At last he went into a school, where he struck the pillar that supported the roof with his fist, and broke it asunder, so that the roof fell in and destroyed the children. Pursued for this, he took refuge in a great chest, and having shut the lid upon him, he held it down so fast that many men together could not force it open; when they had cut the chest in pieces, they could not find him either dead or alive. Struck with this strange affair, they sent to consult the oracle at Delphi, and had from the priestess this answer:—

"'The race of heroes ends in Cleomedes.' It is likewise said, that the body of Alcmena was lost as they were carrying it to the grave, and a stone was seen lying on the bier in its stead. Many such improbable tales are told by writers who wanted to deify beings naturally mortal."

20. Dio Cassius relates that Livia, about a.d. 14, gave a large reward to Numericus Atticus, a senator, who affirmed that he had seen her husband, the Emperor Augustus, ascending to heaven in the same manner as Romulus had been seen by Proeulus.

21. It is thus clearly manifest that the beliefs of the Gentile nations of antiquity with reference to a future life, are similar to the New Testament ideas; in fact, the same beliefs under different guises. So, also, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, his subsequent appearances, and his ascension to heaven, are not without parallels in preceding and contemporary fame. The alleged appearances of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, Peter, James, Paul, and the others, rest on no evidence intrinsically stronger than the appearance of Romulus to Julius Proeulus, or of Augustus to Numericus Atticus. The fact of Livia paying money to one who reported that he had seen Augustus ascend to heaven shows how deeply this idea was rooted in Roman belief. All, therefore, who were swayed by the current Roman traditions would have seen nothing incredible in Jesus and his claims. These exactly corresponded to what they had been taught from childhood. They had merely to transfer to Jesus marvels similar to those which had formed their early faith. The rise of Christianity to be the dominant-religion of the Roman empire is often referred to as a proof of its divine origin and guidance; but uniting, as it did, the discipline, organisation, earnestness, moral authoritative-ness, and exclusive claim to the favour of God (transferring to believers of every race, but to believers alone, that divine favour which was previously the peculiar possession of the seed of Abraham),—all derived from the synagogue,—uniting these with the ancient fundamental beliefs, under another name, of the various Gentile nations, it is not difficult to discern the causes of its triumph, in an age unaccustomed to weigh evidence, and at a time when *ancient forms* were losing their hold on the faith and allegiance of the masses. Even in modern religious revivals, the most common manifestations are of convictions which had lost their hold on the mind, or which had become practically powerless to stir under regular ministrations, springing up into renewed vigour and intensity in some novel guise, or through a description of preaching or service out of the common.

22. And this belief in a life beyond the grave, and pretended knowledge of its conditions—under one form or other one of the most ancient and widespread conceptions of the human race—what has it led to? Inhumanity in time past, inhumanity now; bloodshed and misery, dark delusion, degrading superstition, priestly pretence, persecution and intolerance, creed exclusiveness and bigoted zeal, misdirected fervour and visionary hopes—all the offspring of this conviction—fill the records of mankind.

23. Among barbarous races the vivid realisation of the spiritual world has led to such sad misguidance of the life on earth as the following;—(a.) The custom, prevalent both in ancient and modern times, of sacrificing wives, friends, and slaves at funerals to supply the wants of the deceased in the land of spirits, or to accompany him thither, (b.) Men killing their relations "out of love," as soon as they showed signs of decrepitude, under the belief that in the next world the spirits will be vigorous or otherwise, corresponding to the state of the body at time of death, (c.) Incitement to bloodshed and war by the belief that the enemies a man killed in this world, or those of whose skulls or scalps he obtained possession, would serve him as slaves in the next; or by the more manly conviction that a warring life on earth and a glorious death in battle were the best preparations for the future state, (d.) The practice, still carried on to a frightful extent among some of the African races, of killing men to serve as messengers to their departed kindred in the other world, (e.) The various gloomy and degrading delusions through the arts of spirit-mediums, sorcerers, witches, or other pretenders to intercourse with or control over the spirit-world.

24. Among nations more advanced, the union of assurance of a blissful or woeful immortality, with adherence or non-adherence to any particular banner, sect, or creed, has led—(a.) To bloody religious wars, such as those waged for the spread of Islam, the Mohammedan believing that if he fell in battle he would immediately possess a paradise of every sensual delight; or such as the Crusades, where the red cross was held to be the symbol of sure salvation. (6.) To those inhuman persecutions where men, in the name of religion and in the interest of their own souls, condemned their fellow-men to the dungeon, the stake, the gibbet, and the sword, butchers and butchered both believing that they were doing "God service." Where the sufferers in such cases were sacrificed solely to the intolerance of their adversaries, and themselves wished for no more than freedom of thought—sad their lot! But impartial inquiry reveals that, in most instances, the persecuted would have dealt the same measure to their persecutors, if the conditions of power had been reversed, all alike holding that those whose belief was, in their eyes heretical had no right to share either the chequered happiness of this life or the bliss of the world to come. Heirs of salvation on one side, heirs of damnation on the other.

25. The belief that the immortal soul, while on earth, is enchained or imprisoned in a corrupt body, and that the more the body is attenuated and exhausted the purer, the soul will be, and the more fitted for the contemplation of divine things, has led men and women to separate themselves from their kind, to pass unnatural lives in penitential exercises and mortifications, either in solitude or among communities apart from the world. Abstinence from marriage has been a condition common to almost all these devotees, so that for the sake of the soul, fondly believed to be immortal, they forbear the enjoyment of the only means for the continuance of human life—viz., that of living over again in children and descendants. Myriads of lives have been utterly wasted and perverted by this form of the delusion, their folly receiving, for the most part, the countenance, support, and reverence of blinded contemporaries.

26. The ideas handed down from past ages, and still widely prevalent, that there are certain orders of men

who have the keys of heaven and hell, who possess such favour or influence with the invisible powers as to be able to ensure a happy or a wretched immortality, or even to alter the condition of the soul after death; or, in other quarters, that certain orders of men are the divinely appointed teachers of that doctrine or belief, on the correct acceptance or appreciation of which the state of the future life depends; or, among others, that apart from any particular clerical order there is a saving doctrine or belief, and that on its correct reception or understanding, or otherwise, eternal bliss or woe will result;—to what do such ideas tend? They are not new or peculiar to Christianity. The worshippers under the ancient Persian religion are thus exhorted:—"To obtain the acceptance of this guide to salvation (the priest), you must faithfully pay him tithes of all you possess, of your goods, of your lands, and of your money. If the priest be satisfied your soul will escape hell tortures; you will secure praise in this world and happiness in the next. For the priests are the teachers of religion; they know all things and deliver all men." This is explicit and straightforward, and contrasts favourably with the more guarded phrase in which modern clergy advocate similar claims, or claims founded on the same idea, *that their ministration, in one way or other, is connected with the future lot of their hearers*. The "remedy of the soul" under one form of Christianity, the "advancement of the cause of Christ," who will repay deeds done in his service with the riches of "grace and glory", under another, are and have been the two ruling motives by which the offerings of the faithful flow into the coffers of the clergy, for the establishment, whether by states or individuals, of orders of men claiming titles of reverence from, moral control over, and direction and limitation of the knowledge and professed belief of their fellows, all under the prevailing idea "of a life to come," to happiness in which their ministrations and counsel are believed to be safe guides. Thus, unsparing generosity, steadfast devotion, self-sacrificing enthusiasm, intellectual power, love of kind, and others of the highest and best human traits, instead of being turned towards remedying the evils and inequalities of the life on earth, and of improving it to the utmost, have been utterly perverted and wasted on orders of men and ecclesiastical establishments, and observances and doctrines, all more or less connected with a future state, the fond hope of misguided mortals.

27. Such and so great, then, in brief, are among the more prominent evils that have arisen out of the ancient and widespread belief in a "life to come," of which the resurrection of Jesus, and the connected doctrines and practices, constitute one important development; to which the religion of Moses was antagonistic, not, as Christians claim, antecedent, but which, under one form or other, has exercised a powerful sway under almost all, if not all, the other ancient religions.

## CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

### 1. The results, then, of this inquiry are:—

(a.) It has been shown that none of the supernatural occurrences mentioned in the New Testament, as testimonies to the supernatural claims of Jesus, rest on the accordant testimony of two or three witnesses; that there is also the most serious variance between the accounts of the different writers,—not that variance resulting in substantial agreement which often characterises the statements of two independent eye-witnesses relating different impressions of the same event, but that variance which characterises illusion and man-deifying fable. Thus, a condition of ordinary proof, required by the deity of the Mosaic as well as by the deity of the Christian system, is not fulfilled. Far less does the evidence satisfy that most righteous demand ever put forward by each earnest man, for proof of the highest and strictest kind, before he yields a conscience-approved assent to occurrences and to claims professing to be specially representative of a being held to be beyond and supreme over Nature. How else but by the demand for strictest proof could special manifestations of a true God (if any such had occurred or were to occur) be distinguished from pretence and imposture? Each religious system judges the pretensions of all others by severe tests of evidence and rightful incredulity, but refuses to apply these to its own. And what sort of being can they conceive an Almighty to be who affirm that he not only commands and approves belief in supernatural events, on such evidence and on such grounds as are put forth by the New Testament compilers, or on the impassioned utterances of preachers or other emotional influences, but also that he has left those to perish in their sins who do not so believe. He, an Almighty maker of the universe, approve credulity, disapprove rightful incredulity and keen inquiry, ordain belief without conscience-satisfying evidence, less regardful of truth, less righteous than man!

(b) It has also been made clear that the New Testament deity is altogether different from the Mosaic, and that the various conceptions with reference to the supernatural claims of Jesus are of heathen (i.e., non-Mosaic) origin. A woman conceiving a child through direct intercourse with the deity, that child brought up as the reputed son of her husband, the tale of the star-gazing wise men of the East, the spirit of the Eternal appearing in a bodily shape like a dove, the ordinance of baptism, the arch-fiend Satan and his subject demons, the heaven and hell of the New Testament, the resurrection of Jesus, his subsequent appearances, his ascension, the doctrine of a future life, all, it has been found, corresponded to the prominent religious beliefs of the various Gentile nations, and were wholly opposed to or ignored by Mosaic teaching. The claim of Christianity, therefore, to be the representative of the Mosaic deity is thus destroyed, and the alleged fulfilment of Jewish prophecy in the events of the life of Jesus is also seen, on careful examination of the details, to be altogether without foundation. There is thus no ground for that conscience-satisfying belief which might otherwise have rested on valid evidence of the power, and wonder-working, and special revelations, and faithfully fulfilled predictions of *one and the same being* continued down through many generations of men.

2. What, then, is left to those who had cherished these beliefs, and rested on them, when their fond faith and hope are overthrown by fairly prosecuted inquiry? What, rather, is *not* left? Their own life on earth; their fellow-men in their various relations; the good earth on which man holds the highest position and subdues to his own use; the knowledge and understanding of the material and moral laws of the universe and its

harmony and order; the application of these laws, so far as they affect the well-being of man, to the alleviation of misery, to the diffusion of comfort, and to general progress, physical, moral, and intellectual,—all these remain,—sources of rejoicing and thankfulness, objects of affection, of solicitude, of admiration—ample scope for the exercise of every useful and loving and noble quality of the race. So, then, may we be taught to number the days of our brief life "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

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