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# The bridge of history over the gulf of time

Thomas Cooper

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**THE BRIDGE OF HISTORY  
OVER THE GULF OF TIME.**





THE  
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OVER THE GULF OF TIME:

A POPULAR VIEW OF THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE  
FOR THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY  
THOMAS COOPER,  
*Lecturer on Christianity:*  
*Author of "The Purgatory of Suicides," "The Baron's Yule Feast,"*  
*"Alderman Ralph," "The Family Feud," etc.*

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1871.



TO  
JOHN CROSSLEY, ESQ.,  
OF HALIFAX,  
AS AN HUMBLE TOKEN  
OF ESTEEM AND ADMIRATION FOR  
HIS OWN AND HIS FAMILY'S  
NOBLE PHILANTHROPY,  
THIS VOLUME  
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED  
BY  
THE AUTHOR.



## PREFACE.

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WITHIN these fourteen years I have *spoken* the contents of this book—(sometimes in the form of a summary, as one long lecture; at other times, more completely, as several lectures)—in all the large towns, and in many of the other towns and villages of England, Scotland, and Wales; but they are now *written*, for the first time. I have written them at the urgent request of hundreds of my hearers, who assure me they wish to see in print what they have listened to with gratification.

In putting my spoken words into writing, I have thought it better to preserve the tone of familiarity—the iteration—the colloquialism—the lively interrogative—in brief, all that marks the manner and method of the popular lecturer, who, if he would be successful, must practise every art of address in order to lead his hearers to think. And I trust

that the light thoughts here printed may lead light readers to take up my book and read—until they feel so much attracted by the important evidence it treats, that they determine to enter, without delay, on a full and complete study of it in Paley, and Horne, and Lardner; as well as in the valuable contributions to the “evidences” by Canon Westcott, and other excellent writers of our times.

I may be allowed to add that the “Historical evidence” has only formed a part of my work, as a lecturer, during these last fourteen years. The Miracles, the Resurrection, the perfect Moral Teaching, and the unique excellence of the character of Christ, have also been repeatedly taken up and treated in my lectures. And being deeply aware of the tendency to atheistic questioning in our day, I have also dealt with the arguments for Natural, as well as Revealed Religion. Thus, I have treated familiarly and in popular terms, not only the “Design argument,” so finely expounded by Paley, but also the “Argument *à-priori*”—now, at length, after all the partial successes of Clarke, and Howe, and Locke, and a host of lesser names, so perfectly and irrefutably established by my highly intelligent friend, Mr. Gillespie. The argument for God’s existence from the fact of our own Moral Nature, the arguments against Mate-

rialism and for a Future State of Rewards and Punishments, have had also to be taken up and treated, with such poor ability as I possess, in order to complete the full course of Evidence. If the sample of my lecturing which I now publish meets with acceptance, I may try to put the rest—all as yet only *spoken*—into writing for publication.

THOMAS COOPER.

*July, 1871.*





# THE BRIDGE OF HISTORY

## OVER THE GULF OF TIME, ETC.

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THERE seems to be one question which every one has a right to ask the man who says that Christianity is not true. And the question is this : If Christianity be not true, where did it come from?—how came it into the world? You say, Christianity is not true. Then, what is it, if it be not true? What is its origin?—how comes it to be here, in this land, and in other lands, at this present time?

The question that we ask is not a light, frivolous one. This Christianity is understood to be the professed religion of 335 millions of the human race, now dwelling on this globe. They are not savages : they are not nations bearing a stereotyped resemblance of civilization. They are the noblest peoples on the face of the earth : the nations that have the highest science, arts, power, and culture ever yet attained by man. How comes it that these nations

profess the Christian religion? and how came Christianity into the world? Where did it come from? as we asked at first.

There are but Two Theories that can make any pretension to be considered formidable which have been put forth as answers to this question. The old theory, so well known as the "Sun Theory;" and the later one, which has been called the "Mythical Theory." Let us look at the older theory first.

The "Sun Theory" is understood to owe its fatherhood, as a complete hypothesis, to the notable Sir William Drummond, who presented it to the restricted circle of critical enquirers, in his "Œdipus Judaicus." Godfrey Higgins, of Skellow Grange, near Doncaster, laboured more than twenty years, he assures us, in the compilation of a huge quarto book, entitled "The Anacalypsis." In this book—which is one of the strangest collections of strange learning ever written—the Sun Theory is also maintained; but like the work of Sir William Drummond, the "Anacalypsis" is only known to the small circle of readers who make eager search for everything that is curious. Perhaps the books of Dupuis and Volney, the French supporters of the Sun Theory, are more widely known. Indeed, the "Ruins of Empires," by Volney, is known to thousands by a common English translation.

But the Sun Theory owes its real popularity in our own country to the "Reverend" Robert Taylor, as

he usually styled himself. He was educated at one of the universities, and ordained for a clergyman : but, becoming sceptical, threw up his curacy, and ventured on London, as a free-thinking teacher. In the years 1824—34 he taught publicly, in that capacity, in the Rotunda, a well-known room at that time, on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge, and in other public places in the metropolis. He also published a book entitled "The Diegesis," in explication and defence of the Sun theory.

"And what is this theory?" say you. It is this: That no real human person called Jesus of Nazareth ever existed; that Christ only represents the Sun, like the Krishna of the Hindoos, the Osiris of the Egyptians, the Mithras of the Persians, the Phœbus Apollo of the Greeks, and the Sun god whom our Anglo-Saxon forefathers worshipped on Sunday. Jesus Christ is simply a personification of the Sun, and never had any real human existence. And what is called Christianity is only the old fable of the Sun in a new form: the story so often repeated in the mythologies of the ancient nations has at length taken this new guise of "Christianity"—which, in a word, is only Paganism slightly altered.

"And what are the proofs," say you, "given of the truth of this theory, by Taylor and his predecessors?" There are no proofs: they were never attempted. "What! are there no alleged facts on which the theory rests?" No, only fancies: not

facts, but fancies—such as these : This Jesus of Nazareth is related to have had Twelve Apostles, and it is said that He “went in and out among them.” That is only the sun going in and out among the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and bringing the twelve calendar months in their turn. This Jesus of Nazareth is related to have died and risen again. That is only the sun setting and rising again. The Divine Child is said to have been born at Christmas-tide, when the sun has run his yearly course and days are shortest. That is the sun, who may be said to be born again on the shortest day.

Fancies, you know, have often taken as strong a hold of the human mind as facts ; and so we are not entitled to despise these fancies. We must proceed to rigid historical enquiry for ourselves. We must ascertain whether it be an historical fact that there has been such a real human person living in this world as Jesus of Nazareth. We must be able to confront that man with a positive and truthful denial who tells us that Jesus never walked the streets of Jerusalem, or climbed the Mount of Olives, or travelled over the land of Galilee, or sailed over the lake of Gennesaret with his disciples ; that he never was baptized by John in the Jordan ; that he never chose his twelve disciples ; that he never taught the great doctrines, never rehearsed the parables attributed to him in the New Testament ; that he never performed his

mighty miracles, never was crucified, and never rose from the dead.

We cannot begin this inquiry where Paley, in his masterly "Evidences," begins it. We cannot set Christ himself, or his apostles undergoing sufferings in consequence of their belief in Him, before the sceptic by way of commencement. He would say, "Prove that such a person existed. You are begging the inquiry at once." We must take a very different course.

Let me invite you to accompany me, in a march, or journey, over the BRIDGE OF HISTORY, which we will conceive as spanning the GULF OF TIME. Not time to come, but time *Past*. Time is the great oblivious gulf in which all man's past deeds, words, and thoughts are alike entombed, save the slight thread of them that memory has recorded. And this slight thread is, in reality, the slender "Bridge of History over the Gulf of Time," of which we are speaking, and over which we propose to travel. Our journey will be a retrogressive and retrospective one. And this Bridge of which I speak will have to be composed of Nineteen Arches, representing the Nineteen Centuries of Christianity. And we will call each of these Arches by some distinguishing name, to render it rememberable, and to aid the process of fixing the names of the events and actors of the different centuries in our minds. We shall not need to dwell for any great length of time on the

Arches we shall first travel over. The strictest and most laborious part of our enquiry will have to come when we are drawing near the other end of the Bridge, and towards the close of our journey.

I. What shall we call this Nineteenth Century—the Arch of the Bridge of History on which we now stand? Let us call it the ARCH OF SCIENCE. Science is the boast of our age. There is more science in the world than ever there was. Man has more knowledge of nature, and mastery over its elements and forces, than ever he had before. But all the science there is in the world has not put the Christian religion out of the world. It is known and received by more millions of human beings than ever knew of it or received it before. There are more thousands of buildings for Christian worship in the world than ever : more hundreds of thousands of teachers and preachers of the religion than ever ; more millions than ever of the Bible—the book in which the Christian religion is taught.

It is affirmed that there is not now a *written* language in the world but either the whole Bible, or part of the Bible, is translated into that language. It is said that seventy translations of the Scriptures have been accomplished in our own century, chiefly by Christian missionaries ; for I ought to remind you that Christian missionaries do not go abroad to play at being gentlemen. They have often the roughest work to perform ; often to initiate civilization. It

was the knowledge of that fact that led good old Rowland Hill to say, "a missionary ought to be able to preach a sermon, or make a wheelbarrow." And Christian missionaries are civilizers still. The great agencies of Christianity at home and abroad engage millions of mankind in one way or another; and unreckonable gold and silver, and unmeasurable energies of men, are perpetually being spent in sustaining these agencies.

Whence has all this arisen? Among the three hundred and thirty-five millions of the human race who at present profess the Christian religion there are immense differences in doctrine; but these millions alike hold these to be facts: that Jesus of Nazareth was born into our world as the Redeemer of the world; that He was baptized by John in the Jordan; that he chose his twelve apostles as companions; that he taught the doctrines and performed the miracles attributed to him in the New Testament; that he was crucified, and rose again from the dead. Are these *no* facts? Has Christianity sprung out of the old fable about the sun? Let us pass from our own arch of the Bridge of History to the arch before ours, in the order of time, and see if we find Christianity—that is to say, such Christianity as we ourselves profess—upon that arch.

II. What shall we call the Eighteenth Century? Let us call it the ARCH OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. That was the most important event of the eighteenth



century. Its effects are being still felt, and are likely to be felt for incalculable years to come. "But I think," says one, "you have made an unlucky choice of a name in calling your new arch of the Bridge of History the Arch of the French Revolution. Do you not remember that they put Christianity out of existence in that very revolution?" Nay, my friend; they *tried* to put it out of existence, but did not succeed. What though they set up the worship of the goddess Reason in Notre Dame? What though they abolished the Christian week and Sabbath, and established decades, with a holiday on the tenth day, instead? These were but short-lived acts of insanity.

And yet perhaps greater opposition was never made to Christianity since it came into the world than that which was directed against it in the eighteenth century. In France it was attacked by the leading minds of Voltaire and Rousseau and Diderot and d'Alembert, and by a crowd of their associates. And in our own country it was opposed by Tindal, and Toland, and Woolston, and Blount, and Morgan, and Chubb, and Anthony Collins, and Hume, and Lord Shaftesbury, and Lord Bolingbroke; but it was victoriously defended by the greatest Greek scholar of his age, Dr. Bentley; by the two greatest logicians of their time, Dr. Samuel Clarke and Bishop Butler, as well as by Warburton, and Sherlock, and Ray, and Derham, and others. Chris-

tianity was also being preached very vigorously in our country in the last century by Whitfield and the two Wesleys, who frequently addressed thousands in the open air: Kingswood colliers, and Cornish miners, and crowds on Kennington Common. And drunken men by hundreds became sober men from hearing them; and bad fathers and bad husbands became good men.

Where did Christianity come from? I ask again. Was it an old story about the sun coined into a new form that changed the human heart and reformed men's natures? And was all this attack and defence really about the fable of the sun? Did Jesus of Nazareth never exist? Did He never teach the doctrines attributed to him? never perform his miracles? Was he never crucified, never rose again from the dead? Let us journey backward to the century before the eighteenth Arch of the Bridge of History—before the Arch of the French Revolution—and see if we find what we deem to be Christianity in existence then and there.

III. What shall we call the Seventeenth Century? Let us call it the ARCH OF OLIVER CROMWELL. He was the most distinguished person of the century in our own country, at any rate. And, thank God, there is no one ashamed of the name of Oliver Cromwell now. His name does not lie at the bottom of the ditch of defamation, covered with the mud of spite and malice. You may thank

my illustrious friend Thomas Carlyle for taking up Cromwell's great memory, and clearing it from the dirt so long cast upon it. Oliver Cromwell is known now to have been a large-hearted Christian man, and to have wished to establish a Christian Government in this land. And the "Founder of the Commonwealth," as he was often called, John Hampden, was a Christian man, and died praying for his greatest enemy, as well as for England—"Lord, open the King's eyes! Lord, bless my country!" were his last words.

The seventeenth century was a distinguished Christian century. If you would read the most profound and eloquent books on Christianity ever written in the English language, you must go to that age for them; you must read the exhaustive Isaac Barrow, the deep-thinking John Howe, and Jeremy Taylor, "the Shakespeare of divines," with a huge catalogue of other noble writers. Be it ever remembered that the name which deserves so much reverence—the name of Milton—is also a Christian name; that he has left us his treatise on Christian doctrine; and that he devoted his highest powers as a poet to the celebration of the great themes of Christianity. Nor let the name which deserves equal, if not higher reverence—the great name of Newton—be forgotten; the philosopher who walked so humbly with his God, and studied the Christian Scriptures so devoutly. And who can forget to

name the inspired tinker and his immortal "Pilgrim's Progress?" He would be an ungrateful Christian who could forget the name of John Bunyan, while making a catalogue of the worthies of Christian England. Nor should I think much of that man's honour or courage who was ashamed of the name of George Fox. Reckoning all the various periods of his incarceration, George passed twelve years of his brave and holy life in prison for conscientious opposition to the shams and tyrannies of his times; but even in prison, where he had often but a hard, mouldy crust to eat, and nought to drink save water from a bucket in which wormwood had been steeped, he could rejoice in Christ.

Whence came all this devotedness to Christianity, and busy writing and thinking about it in the seventeenth century? Was it all a silly dream and misemployment of time? Did Jesus of Nazareth never tread this earth, never shed His blood upon the cross, nor ever rise again from the dead? Has Christianity only sprung out of sun-worship? Let us journey onward to another Arch of the Bridge of History, and see if we find Christianity thereon.

IV. What shall we call the Sixteenth Century? Let us call it the ARCH OF MARTIN LUTHER. And who was Luther? One of God's sledge-hammer men, whom He sent into the world to do strong work. When God has strong work to be done in the world, He does not appoint a namby-pamby

kind of man to do it ; a man wrapped up in satin, and scented with lavender. No : He appoints a buckhorn-fisted man, a sinewy man, a man of "muscular Christianity,"—as my good, true-hearted friend, Charles Kingsley, would say—to perform the work. Martin Luther was a muscular Christian ; and he was just the man that was wanted at his time of day.

Luther lost his dear young friend, Alexis, by a stroke of lightning, and was stricken with the deep conviction that God had spared his life for some great and holy purpose. He was resolved to devote himself to religion, and imagined he could not be so religious anywhere as in a monastery. His strong-minded father had no good opinion of monks or monasteries, and did not wish him to go into a monastery—but go he would. Luther, however, soon found there was not so much religion in the monastery as he expected to find there ; but, on the contrary, a great deal of irreligion.

He himself, nevertheless, was in earnest. He went down into the depths of his own heart, and discovered his own depravity and sin, and cried to God for deliverance. He got possession of a Bible at last—for it was a difficult thing to get possession of a Bible, even in a monastery, at that time of day ; and in the precious book he began to find the remedy for the evils of his nature. But he could find nothing in the Bible about Purgatory,

and the power of priests to bring men's souls out of Purgatory, by mumbling so many masses for money ; he could find nothing in the Bible about worshipping the Virgin Mary ; nothing about praying to dead saints. The Book said there was "One Mediator between God and man ;" it did not name as mediators any of the thousand and one saints of the Roman Catholic calendar. The Bible proclaimed no indulgences, recommended no holy wafers, set up no relics for veneration, authorized no forgiveness of sins by priests. Such, gradually, became Luther's conviction ; and his tongue burned to tell it. But, like all really good and great men, he was not rash, he was not precipitate. He humbled himself before God, and prayed God to keep him humble, and to save him from doing wrong. Yet, the more he read the Bible, and prayed for Divine light upon it, the stronger grew his conviction that the teachings of the Romish Church were false ; and at length something occurred which unloosed his tongue, and compelled him to speak out.

The proud Pope of that time—perhaps the proudest Pope that ever lived but one, Hildebrand, or Gregory VII., who ordered the Emperor of Germany to kiss his toe!—I say, this proud Pope of Luther's time, Leo X., had a great scheme in his mind. He was one of the gorgeous De Medicis family, of Florence, and was a man of sumptuous

tastes ; and he wished to transform the Church of St. Peter, at Rome into the grandest Christian temple in the world. The genius of Bramante, and the genius of Michael Angelo, stood ready to aid him,—but how to raise the money? That was the question. Christian Europe had sent so much money to Rome, that it grew weary, and said it would send no more, for it was only like pouring it into a sink : nothing came out of it but stench ! So Pope Leo had to set his wits to work ; and soon believed he had discovered the sure means of “raising the wind,” as we say : he could send out indulgences for sale.

So forth into Switzerland went Sampson the monk, and forth into Germany went Tetzels, the Dominican friar, with indulgences to sell ! If any poor sinner could give a few copper pieces for one of their bits of rotten parchment, it procured him pardon for all the sins he had committed since he was born ! The poor sinner did not get the pardon, you understand, by repentance and faith in Christ ; but because the Pope had thrown all that virtue into the parchment ! The most remarkable thing was, that if the poor sinner could give silver instead of copper pieces for the parchment, the purchase procured him pardon not only for all the sins he had committed, but for all that he would ever commit so long as he lived ! The news of this infamous Papal imposture came to the ears of

Martin Luther, unloosed his tongue, and impelled him to speak out.

"What!" he cried, "call you that God's religion? I say it is the Devil's religion. Call that the religion from heaven? I say it comes from hell!"

"Oh, shocking!" cried the poor timid people: "the holy Pope has sent the man to sell the indulgences."

"Holy Pope?" cried Luther; "I say—most *unholy* Pope!"

"*Unholy* Pope!" People thought the sky would fall, or the judgment-day would come! They turned as white as sheets, and stared like stricken rats! Such words had never been heard of; and people felt sure the world must soon come to an end. But Martin Luther began to ply the sledgehammer of attack in right earnest; and very soon an earnest band of men joined him; and, in the course of a few years they gave old Popery such a shaking, that she has never recovered herself up to the present time. Nay,—I did not say they killed the old snake! No: they only scotched her. But she was terribly cramped and rheumatized, even long after Luther's time.

God so favoured this grand labourer, that he died a natural death in his bed. But that was not the lot of all who took up his principles. In our own land, you know, many had to go to the stake,



and die in the flames, because they joined the spirit of Luther, and protested against Popery and Romish superstition.

In the reign of our Mary alone, Lord Burleigh believed that two hundred and ninety were burnt alive, of which a considerable number were women. In Scotland, where Knox so manfully headed the struggle against Popery, the martyrs were many; the Scottish men thrill with as deep feeling when they hear pronounced the names of George Wishart, and Patrick Hamilton, and Henry and Thomas Forrest, and Norman Gourlay, and their fellow-martyrs, as that which moves the heart of every Protestant Englishman, when he thinks of the cherished memories of Latimer, and Ridley, and Hooper, and Philpot, and Bradford, and Rowland Taylor, and Bainham, and Bilney, and Tyndale, and Anne Askew, and the rest of our noble army of martyrs.

Whence came the religion concerning whose doctrines there was so much contest in this sixteenth century? The contest was against corruption; but we cannot wonder that corruption should arise among the professors of Christianity. Their corruptness does not prove the religion itself to be corrupt, or untrue. It simply proves that they are fallen human beings. Man corrupts everything that is good, or tries to do so. It is a proof of his depravity. No man, therefore, ought to wonder at

the foul corruptions which Popery has endeavoured, so successfully, to mingle with Christianity.

Where came the belief of the sixteenth century from, that Jesus of Nazareth had lived on earth, worked miracles, been crucified, and risen again from the dead? Is it all but a reproduction of the fable of the sun? Let us journey on again, and see if Christianity was in existence on the Arch of our Bridge of History before that of Martin Luther

V. What shall we call the Fifteenth Century Let us call it the ARCH OF THE INVENTION OF PRINTING. Just in the very middle of this Arch—in the year 1450—the first Bible is printed by metal types, at Mayence, in Germany. Bibles, we learn, had been copied by writing before; but now they were soon to be multiplied by printing—in spite of all the opposition of Popery. That infamous Pope—Innocent the Eighth—whom the inhabitants of Rome derisively styled “Father of the Romans,” because he had seven or eight sons by different mothers—was doing bold work for Satan in this century. On the slopes of the Dauphinese Alps his hell-hound instruments chased the crowds of lowly Christian men who held Waldensian opinions into caverns, woods, and clefts of the rocks, and slaughtered them. In this century too we have to chronicle those great strugglers for truth—strugglers against Popish corruption—who have won bright historic names; Savonarola, a sort of

half-Protestant, in Italy; and John Huss and Jerome of Prague, who preached a reformed Christianity, in Moravia and Bohemia.

Thank God! He has always had a pure believing Church on the earth since the Saviour appeared! I repeat, there has always been such a Church since Christianity first came into the world, although it has often been a cruelly-used and persecuted Church. Not to dwell now on the Waldenses, for we shall have to meet them again, be it observed that the followers of Huss and Jerome of Prague, maintained pure Christian truth, before Luther began his great and memorable struggle for reformation. And what became of these great strugglers for truth among the Moravian and Bohemian nations, in the fifteenth century? They were burnt to death. Who burned them to death? Men who said that Jesus had never lived, and that Christianity was founded on the old fable of the sun? Oh no! the Roman Catholics, who burned them, believed *then*, as Roman Catholics believe *now*,—and as Protestants, and Protestant Dissenters, and Russian and Greek Christians, and Armenian and Maronite and Nestorian Christians, and all professing Christians, believe *now*—that Jesus Christ was born into our world as the Redeemer of the world, that he was baptized of John in the Jordan, chose his twelve Apostles, taught his great lessons of goodness and truth, performed

his miracles, was crucified, and rose again from the dead.

However widely they may differ respecting certain doctrines, the historical facts of Christ's life are held to be facts alike by all the sects of professing Christians now ; and they were also held to be facts in the fifteenth century. How came they to be so held to be facts? Where did Christianity come from? we ask again. Shall we find it in the world in the century preceding the fifteenth? Let us advance again, in our rapid passage or march over the Bridge of History.

VI. What shall we call the Fourteenth Century? Let us call it the ARCH OF JOHN WYCKLIFFE. "Our own Luther," as we may call him, "born out of due time." More than one hundred years before Luther was teaching the Germans, and before Huss taught the Bohemians and Moravians, John Wyckliffe was teaching a reformed Christianity in our own land, and bravely protesting against Popery—for he openly styled the Pope 'Antichrist.' Nay, in Wyckliffe's time there were two rival Popes—two "Infallibles," denouncing and cursing one another—and Wyckliffe called both of them Antichrists. Wyckliffe's followers, you know, were called "Lollards,"—which is said to mean singers—from *lollen*, an old German verb, meaning *to sing*. Many of the Lollards were weavers, it seems ; and weaving was a poor trade *then*, as it

often is *now*; and so the Lollards sang the songs of Zion at their looms, because they could not get time to retire to pray. Christ's followers have found singing to be a sweet way of praying, many a time and oft, since these poor Lollards sang at their looms !

Our noble Wyckliffe, you know, strove to perform for Englishmen what Luther afterwards performed for the Germans : he translated the Bible into the people's common tongue. We have the fruit of what he did, and of what the martyred Tyndale did still better, in our authorised version at the present time. It had been a custom for the old Romanist priests to have a Bible before them when they preached ; a Latin Bible : some people said that many of them could not read it very well ; but never mind that ! they had a Bible before them ; and they were often very eloquent, no doubt, in describing the Bible as the great map or chart of the way to heaven, and in declaring that no man could ever have found his way to heaven if God had not sent men this invaluable map or chart. But now imagine an earnest layman whose mind is awakened to the need of finding the way to heaven.

"Thank you, thank you, good father !" says he ; "but now, so please you, most reverend father, let me see the map in my own hand, that I may find the way."

"See you at Jericho first !" replies the holy

father, shutting up the book in a hurry, and putting it behind him: "Don't think *you* are to see the map, sir."

"How, then, so please you, holy father," asks the layman, "shall I find the way?"

"Oh, I'll tell you the way," answers the priest.

"But suppose you should make a mistake, holy father?" suggests the layman.

"Mistake, sir!" cries the priest, "I'm astonished at your impudence in daring to suppose that I can make a mistake! Don't you know that priests are infallible, sir?"

"Oh dear! holy father!" cries the layman, alarmed at the priest's anger, "forgive me! I was only thinking——"

"Thinking, sir!" cries the priest, "get away with you, sir! You have nothing to do with thinking. I am to think for you; and you are to do what I bid you."

Thank God that ever there was a brave Wyckliffe in our land to denounce all that priestly tyranny! and let us be determined, fellow-countrymen, that it shall never triumph again, whether it wear the guise of Ritualism, or be possessed of the open mouth and devouring maw of Popery. God Almighty so favoured our Wyckliffe that he died a natural death in his bed, as Luther did in after time. But, forty-two years after his death, a popish bishop had Wyckliffe's bones dug up at

Littleworth : the living, in Leicestershire, that John of Gaunt, is said to have given him ; for "Time-honoured Lancaster," it is affirmed, was always Wyckliffe's protector. And Wyckliffe's bones were burned ! So silly and stupid is blind old superstition ! when she cannot revenge herself by getting a live man's blood, she burns his dead bones,—as if that could be any punishment to him !

There were other earnest men in the world in the Fourteenth Century. Chaucer, also, was protesting against Popish shams, in his "Canterbury Pilgrimage ;" and Dante was denouncing Popes, and leading a life of suffering exile through resistance to their ambition and tyranny.

But where came the New Testament from ? the book that Wyckliffe translated ? Where came the belief from that there had been a real Christ in the world, as well as an antichrist ? Did Jesus never exist on earth ? Is Christianity only the old sun fable in a new form ? Let us journey on again, and see if we find the Christian religion professed and believed when we tread the Arch of the Bridge of History preceding the Arch of John Wyckliffe.

VII. What shall we call the Thirteenth Century ? I propose that we name it the ARCH OF MAGNA CHARTA—for I am passionately in favour of all good old English associations of ideas. But

what has Christianity to do with the Great Charter of English Liberty obtained from King John, by the Barons of Runnymede? My friends, there is a connection that I like very much to remember, and that you should not forget. Who was the mental leader—the living Mind—that led and guided the Barons in their great victory over the tyrant King John? I am not thinking of the knight who led their army—Robert Fitzwalter. I mean their great counsellor and adviser—Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church!

I am a Dissenter, and don't care how soon the bands are broken between Church and State; for I think it has been an unholy wedlock from the first. But I sometimes think I hear my Dissenting brethren talk very strong talk about the Established Church.

"The Established Church," say they, "has always been the foe of liberty."

"Tell truth about the Devil himself," I always reply. "Look over your History of England, please, and you will find that the Established Church has been again and again the staunch preserver of English liberty. There have been periods in our history when there was no power but that of the Established Church that was able to withstand a tyrant king; and the Established Church *did* withstand him, and successfully, too."



"Oh ! ay ! what you are pointing to is true enough," observes some Dissenting brother ; "but there was no patriotism in it. Several occurrences of the kind you mean are to be found in our history, no doubt. But Churchmen did not withstand royal tyranny as patriots, it was only to save something for themselves : it was sheer selfishness, I tell you—no patriotism at all !"

My good friend, I beg to observe that if no man is ever to be deemed a patriot but the man that has no selfishness, I fear you will never find a true patriot in the history of the whole world. We'll grant all the selfishness existed that you speak of ; but if men like Stephen Langton—who very likely wrote out Magna Charta himself, as well as struggled for it—have laboured to strengthen and widen and lengthen the great platform of English liberty for you and me, let us be grateful to their memories.

And the memory of Langton ought to excite gratitude. You remember how, when John had put his royal seal to Magna Charta, and had taken an oath, in the name of the Holy Trinity, to observe all its provisions faithfully, he sent to the Pope, and desired to be absolved from his oath. But lately, you know, he had been a rebel against the Pope ; but when all other friends were gone, he had been compelled to submit to the Pope, and was actually paying the Pope so many hundred crowns a

year for his kingdom ! So he desired, as he had now become an obedient son of the Church, that the Pope would kindly absolve him from the oath he had so solemnly taken to keep Magna Charta ; for he declared it took away all his kingly power, and the Barons might as well have dethroned him as compelled him to take an oath to keep it. And the Pope absolved King John from his oath !

“What !” you cry, “absolve him ? how can any mortal absolve a man from a solemn oath taken in the name of his Maker, and in the presence of assembled thousands of his fellow-men ?” My good friends, do not be shocked when I assure you of what you may learn from history—that many people, at that time, believed that the Pope, in spiritual things, could do almost as much as God Almighty could do ! It is declared by Cardinal Bellarmine—and Rome has no greater authority in the ample list of her cardinals—that if the Pope orders a man to commit sin, the act so committed becomes an act of holiness ! I should deem *that* to be the highest point of the Devil’s Grammar ; and that if he could get all professing Christians to become his scholars so far—that is, to become as great scholars as Cardinal Bellarmine—Old Nick would rub his paws with satisfaction, and say, “Now I am content !”

But what cared Englishmen either for the Pope or the forsworn King ? Be it ever remembered that

our forefathers were rather a crooked lot for Popes to manage. Popes could never get their own bad way, even in their most thrifty times, so easily in England as they wished. The Barons seized the Tower of London, and hung out their flag of defiance against both Pope and King. Whereat King John raged and swore, and foamed at the mouth, and vowed he would have revenge on the rebels. So he now besought the Pope to take the most powerful and extreme means to aid him. And forthwith the Pope sent his bull of excommunication into England.

“What’s that?” say you; “a thing with horns?” No: it is a parchment with a curse written upon it in Latin, and having a leaden bullet attached to it as the Pope’s seal—*bull*a is the Latin word for a bullet, and so it was called a “bull.” And the curse was one of the most horrible that could be conceived upon all persons who would not give up Magna Charta and let the King have his own way, as an oppressor and a tyrant. It was a curse upon them “sitting and standing, and lying and walking, and asleep and awake, and in time and to all eternity—a curse that should hurl them into the bottomless pit, with Koran and Dathan, and Abiram, and Judas Iscariot,” and all the vilest sinners that ever lived!

And the Pope sent this cursing “bull” to Stephen Langton, the Cardinal and Archbishop of Canter-

bury, and commanded him to read it, openly and in the most solemn manner, in his cathedral, with all his monks and priests around him, each holding a lighted candle. And when Langton had read the curse, every monk and priest was to dash out the light of his candle, by throwing it on the ground and trampling it under his feet, as significant of the darkness of the curse that should fall upon this land. For if the Bull had been read by the Archbishop as the Pope commanded, the whole kingdom of England would have been placed under what Papists call an "interdict"; that is to say, no corpse could have been buried, no church bells rung, no religious service performed, no marriage celebrated, no sacrament received! It would have seemed as if an unmeasurable funeral pall hung over the whole land! But the Pope mistook his man. Stephen Langton was an Englishman to the backbone, and would not read the "bull of excommunication." He loved English Liberty, and defied both Pope and King. Poor fellow! he had to go into banishment for it; and could not return to England until the tyrant John's death.

Remember that Langton's memory is a grand memory; and when you, young Englishmen, who are listening to me, go to look at grand old Canterbury Cathedral—and you ought also to go and look at York and Lincoln and Winchester and Salisbury,

and the other monuments of ancient grandeur in the realm—I say, when you go to Canterbury, and the verger busily points out the spot where Becket was murdered and where his shrine stood, and points to the scabbard and spurs, and helmet of Edward the Black Prince, ask him to guide you to the tomb of Stephen Langton, that you may place your hand upon it, and call up the memory of such an Englishman with heartfelt gratitude.

With shame we call up the name of another Englishman, whom otherwise we could wish to praise, Simon de Montfort, who led the cruel persecution of the Albigenses, in the South of France, to gratify papal power, also in this century. The Albigenses were another branch of Christ's suffering but pure church, which God has always preserved, under one name or other, in the world, since the Saviour appeared. You must read about them, and we must hasten on.

Now, in this thirteenth century, there were grand cathedrals and stately monasteries and parish churches in this land; and the like in France and Spain and Portugal and Italy and Germany and other lands; and the belief was fixed in the minds of millions that Jesus of Nazareth had lived in the world, performed his miracles, been crucified, and risen from the dead. Whence came the belief? Did it really arise out of the wanderings of the human imagination? Is Christianity, indeed, de-

rived from the ancient fable of the sun? Let us recommence our journey, and see if we find Christianity on the Arch of the Bridge of History preceding the thirteenth century, or Arch of Magna Charta.

VIII. What shall we call the Twelfth Century? Let us call it the ARCH OF THE CRUSADES. "What were they?" does any one ask. I answer, The expedition of at least two millions of men, according to the very lowest statement of history, to get possession of the Holy Land. "What Holy Land?" does any one ask again. I reply, The land, in the words of Shakespeare,

"Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,  
Which *eighteen* hundred years ago were nailed,  
For our advantage, on the bitter cross."

The land in which Christ was born, in which he taught, worked his miracles, was crucified, and rose again from the dead. Kings left their thrones, and among them our own *Cœur de Lion*, the bravest; princes and nobles sold or pawned their lands, to get men and horses and ships to go and win possession of the Holy Land. Thousands died before they got out of Europe; thousands perished by sea, and thousands perished in Asia. But they won possession of Jerusalem, and had possession of it for eighty-eight years, as a petty, barren Christian kingdom; for Crusader Kings took their titles from it.

The great soul that kept up this enthusiasm for the Crusades was, doubtless, St. Bernard. But men must have believed that Jesus Christ lived in Palestine, taught, and wrought his miracles there, was crucified, and rose again from the dead there, or they would not have spilt their own blood and wasted their wealth on these Crusades. It is not possible for us—the commercial, the utilitarian, or the scientific men, (or whatever we please to call ourselves,) of the nineteenth-century,—to share in the enthusiasm of the ruder, but, perhaps more earnest men of the twelfth century. They were just awaking from the sleep of the dark ages, and they reasoned thus :—

“We ought not to let these infidel dogs, the Saracens—these children of Mahound—these devotees of Satan—possess that holy land where our Saviour’s blessed feet trod, where he taught and worked his miracles, where he was crucified, and rose from the dead. We, Christian men, *ought* to possess it, and we *will* possess it.”

“Deus vult !” (“God wills it !”) shouted Pope Urban.

“It is good, and right, and holy !” affirmed St. Bernard : and *his* word was saintly law, even above the word of any Pope ; and band after band went on the vain errand of subduing the Holy Land.

It was not vain in another sense ; for the energetic passing to and fro among the peoples of dif-

ferent countries of Europe, and the peoples of Asia and Africa as well, resulted in the laying of broad foundations for the future civilization of Europe. Yet I say we cannot, if we would, rekindle the Crusading enthusiasm. Suppose some warm-natured brother of our number were to say here to-night, "I think the Crusaders were right; and I propose that we all sign a petition to the Queen to send an army, at once, to seize Jerusalem from the Turks!"

"Oh, go to Jericho!" we should all cry out; "let the Turks keep Jerusalem, so long as they do us no harm by it. What! after nine millions spent on that Abyssinian freak, and all the millions spent in the Crimean war, do you suppose we are in the humour for more folly?"

There were many suffering for pure Christianity in this century. Under the names of Paterines, or "Sufferers," Cathari, or "Puritans," "Weavers," "Poor Men," Beguines, Beghards, "Prayer-makers," and a variety of other names, the protesters against Romish superstition were scattered over the country of the Pyrenees, Languedoc in France, and parts of Germany and Italy; and their lives were taken without pity. The fearful Inquisition was at last organized against heresy, and for many long years ran its hideous race of cruelty. It is asserted that one inquisitor-general, the infamous Torquemada, put 9,000 persons to death; and the entire number



slaughtered by the inquisitions is commonly stated at 32,000.

But we remember the name of the Arch of the Bridge of History on which we stand, and fear to prolong our stay upon it beyond your patience. I say again, men must have believed that Christ's well-known history was a history of facts, or they would not have risked their lives in the attempt to get possession of the land in which they believed that he had lived, died, and risen again from the dead. How came men to be believing in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth? Whence did this faith arise? Where did Christianity come from? we ask again. Did Jesus really never exist on this earth; and is Christianity but a reproduction of the old fable of the sun? Let us continue our march along the Bridge of History, and see if we find Christianity on the arch before the Arch of the Crusades.

IX. What shall we name the Eleventh Century? Let us call it the ARCH OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR. It was in this century, you remember, that William, the Duke of Normandy, crossed the English Channel to get possession of our land; and that he fought the battle of Hastings, where Harold was killed: Harold the Saxon nobleman whom they had placed upon the throne on the death of King Edward the Confessor: Edward the Confessor, whose bones lie yonder in Westminster

Abbey yet : you can go and put your hand on his tomb, as I have done. On the 28th of December, 1865, Dean Stanley delivered a rich antiquarian discourse in the Abbey, to celebrate the opening of the Abbey Church 800 years before. King Edward the Confessor had given much money towards the building, and wished to be present when the Abbey Church was opened for worship ; but fell sick, and could not leave his bed. He died six days after ; and then William of Normandy claimed the crown, and the struggle began, which ended in the victory of William.

When William had held the sceptre some years, he grew discontented with the taxes which he derived from the land. The land-tax, you will observe, was *the tax then*. There were no great manufacturing industries, of cotton, or woollen, or linen, to tax. The land-tax, I say, was *the tax then*. It is but a small tax, compared with other taxes, *now*. When landlords got the power of making taxes, they were sure to make the land-tax as little as possible, you know ; and so long as they keep the principal power you may be sure the land-tax will never be very large. William the Conqueror told his ministers that the land-tax was not producing him the sum he needed for government ; and they replied that they were sure the landholders could not afford to pay more tax. William said, in return, he would know what the landholders could afford,

for he would have a survey made of all the estates in the realm. William was a man who had a will of his own, and he carried out the threat to the utmost of his power.

He could not get the survey made in Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, or Westmoreland. The inhabitants of those counties were so unwilling to submit to him that he wasted their possessions with fire and sword, and yet could not subdue them. But the survey was made from the river Tees, the northern boundary of Yorkshire, to the English Channel; and from the German Ocean to the Welsh border. And we have the survey still: the "Domesday Books," as they are called. Not mere copies of the books, but the original books,—the leaves of which William the Conqueror turned over with his own fingers, a huge folio and a thick quarto; written on parchment in a kind of hodge-podge language, half Latin, half English—are still in our possession.

A few years ago these volumes were photographed at the Government photo-zincograph establishment, at Southampton, and the Domesday Book is now sold cheap, each county separately: Get hold of a copy for your own county, and you will see in it the names of your old city, ancient boroughs, towns and villages, with an account of the woods and pastures, and other possessions, and the names of the persons who held them. But take care to mark,

as you go along, how the book tells you that such a bishop has so many carrucates or hides of land in such a parish, and that the priest's name in such a village is so-and-so. The fact of the existence of Christianity as the professed and established religion of the land, is registered in the Domesday Books.

The power of the Papal See was great in this century, for Hildebrand, or Gregory VII., was Pope. Yet Gregory could not get his own way in England. Gregory had "blessed" the banner which had been woven by Norman ladies; and which had been used by William at the battle of Hastings. And Pope Gregory sent to tell the Conqueror that not his sword and valour, and the swords and valour of the Norman host, had won that battle; the victory was solely attributable to the Papal blessing bestowed on the banner. The argument at the end was, that William must compel his people to pay Peter-pence; and must not dare to appoint any of the bishops, since the Pope meant to appoint them all himself. But William snapped his fingers even at the potent Hildebrand, and *did* appoint the bishops.

There were martyrs among the opposers of Popish doctrine and Popish practices in this age in several parts of Germany, and heretics were burned at Orleans in France, and God's lowly people were suffering for the pure faith in Christ in the valleys

of Piedmont ; but we must not delay to give the recital. One book produced in this age should also be mentioned : the "*Cur Deus Homo*," or "Wherefore God became Man," of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the reign of William Rufus, a most remarkable book on the Atonement of Christ to have been produced at such a time.

But we must keep close to our enquiry. Where did the Christianity come from whose doctrines Anselm sought to expound, for which the Vaudois suffered, and which has found a register of its existence in the Domesday Books? The bishops and priests mentioned in those books were teaching the English people, and the English people believed, that Jesus of Nazareth had lived on this earth, taught his great doctrines, wrought his miracles, was crucified, and rose again from the dead. How came the bishops and priests to be teaching, and the people to be believing, that these were facts? Was there no foundation in fact either for the teaching or for the belief? Did Jesus never exist on earth? Is what we call the "Gospel History" all derived from the ancient fable of the sun? Let us step on again, over our Bridge of History, from the eleventh century, or Arch of William the Conqueror, to the arch preceding it, and see if we find Christianity there.

X. What shall we call the Tenth Century? We must call it by a very ominous name ; we must

call it the ARCH OF DARKNESS. It is the middle arch of our bridge, and it may be deemed the darkest part of the "Dark Ages," as the Mediæval or Middle Ages are often called. It was darkness indeed, a darkness like that in Egypt, "that could be felt." Could working men read and write in the tenth century? Most probably not a single working man in all Europe! Then, could not all the gentry read and write? No; only very few of them. But you will think the nobles could all read and write. I fear the real truth is that many of them could do neither. As it was the age of ignorance so was it also the age of superstition; the time of grossest belief in all the "lying vanities" of Popery. Learning, of such kind as it was, was almost confined to the monks and priests. The monks were perhaps performing their best service for us by copying manuscripts of the classics and of the Gospels and Epistles; but the great mass of the people were in profound ignorance, and eagerly believed in the virtue of pilgrimages and relics.

Men went on long and laborious journeys to the distant shrines of saints—such as Our Lady of Loretto, and St. James of Compostella—to merit the pardon of sin, or to undergo penance for it; and others went to the Holy Land, or at least they said they had been there when they returned to Europe, wearing palmer's weeds, that is to say, a long garment and a leathern girdle, a slouched hat,

on which an escalop shell was sewn, and a long staff to support their steps. These pilgrims from the Holy Land had precious relics to show ; bits of the true wood of the holy cross ; and nails and pieces of the nails of the holy cross ! And men, as they gazed on these "holy relics," knelt in awe, and crossed themselves, and repeated their paternosters and aves. And very soon men began to weigh out pounds' weight of gold to give for a bit of the true wood of the cross, even if it did not weigh a quarter of an ounce ; and stones' weight of silver to give for a bit of a nail of the holy cross.

And such was the passion for this traffic, that in the lapse of two centuries it was computed so much of the true wood of the holy cross was brought into Europe that a first-rate ship of war might have been made out of it, and as many nails and pieces of the true nails of the cross were brought into Europe as might have furnished all the iron-work for a first-rate ship of war ! A rare trade—a roaring trade—it seemed to have been, the trade in holy relics. "Supply and Demand," you know ! The fussy Manchester men suppose they have invented a new science : Political Economy, or the laws of "Supply and Demand !" Pooh, pooh ! the invention was before the Manchester men's time ; the old monks and pilgrims were aware of a thing or two in that line.

And as the demand increased, there was plenty

of supply. The pilgrims and their monkish agents soon began to have other holy relics to sell. "Pigge's bones," and "shepe's bones," as Chaucer spells the relics, and oxen's bones. But whether it were a "pigge's bone," or a "shepe's bone," that this relic-monger or the other had to sell, he would swear it was the forefinger of St. Peter, or the little finger of St. John, or the great toe of St. Paul, or a rib of St. Bartholomew. One relic-monger had got a tin box full of the teeth of St. James; and he went about rattling them in the ears of crowds that fell down on their knees and crossed themselves in ecstasy, to think they had heard such a soul-saving sound! Others had got locks of the hair of the Virgin Mary's head, and many had got bottles full of her milk, to sell at an immense price, and to swell the gratitude of the gazing crowd. The toe of St. Paul was a precious possession to Glastonbury Abbey—for it brought great grist to the monk's mill; and in the crypt of old Exeter Cathedral there were more wondrous relics: a piece of the manger in which our Lord had laid; and, above all, a piece of the Burning Bush that Moses saw in the wilderness!

When Harry the Eighth came to the throne, some 500 years and odd after this time, there was such a turning out of this relic-rubbish from the monasteries, churches, and cathedrals, as it would take hours to describe. The greater part of these



instruments of jugglery were burnt, publicly, in the market-places of the land, amidst the shouts and derision of the people, in King Harry's time.

But had God and His Christ no witnesses, no real witnesses, in that dark tenth century? Oh! yes; in the valleys of the Alps were the persecuted Waldenses, who would have nothing to do with the Popish priests, and their pieces of rusty iron and rotten wood, and old rotten bones and teeth and rags, nothing to do, either, with their doctrines of purgatory, or worship of the Virgin Mary, or prayers to dead saints, or confession and absolution of sins. Neither would they accept the priest's holy wafer; but insisted on a more perfect obedience to the Saviour's command in partaking of the Lord's Supper; and it would also seem that immersion baptism was their practice, as being, in their belief, the primitive practice. But the best part of the record of their history is that they clung to the New Testament as their true guide, and that they led holy and self-denying lives, and endeavoured thus to prove their real Christianity. And what became of them, do you ask? They were burned, or put to death in other ways; and sometimes the ways were very cruel. The Waldenses have been a suffering people. Recall Milton's noble sonnet to mind—

•

“Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughter'd saints—”

And so on. They were being persecuted in his time. In some instances they

“rolled

“Mother with infant down the rocks—”

and cast huge stones after them. The news of these Popish murders came to Oliver Cromwell's ears. “Write to the Pope,” said he to his secretary, John Milton, “and tell him if all that devil's work be not ended, he shall soon hear the English cannon at Rome!” The Pope put an end to the murders at once! Men knew whom they had to deal with when Oliver Cromwell intimated what he would do, and dare not trifle. Don't you think we want somebody with his spirit, now and then, in our own day?

But to our enquiry. The murdered Waldenses rejoiced in Christ while they were dying, and in the midst of cruel tortures. How came they to be willing to suffer death? How came they to be reading the New Testament, and taking it as a guide? Where did the book come from? where did the religion come from that it proclaims? Did Jesus of Nazareth never exist on this earth? was He not the teacher of the doctrines contained in the Gospels? did He not perform the miracles related there? did they not crucify Him at Jerusalem, as the book relates? and did He not rise again from the dead? These were believed to be facts in the tenth century: where did the belief

and the religion come from? Is it all a new edition of the ancient fable about the sun? Let us march on, from the Arch of Darkness, the central arch of our Bridge of History, and enter on the arch beyond it.

XI. What shall we call the Ninth Century? Is this arch as dark as the central one? No, thank God, there is a beam of blessed light on this arch. Let us call it the ARCH OF KING ALFRED. Alfred, the father of our Saxon liberty, as we call him. The king who said, "I would that every Englishman should be as free as the air we breathe." If he did *not* say it—for some say he did not—we like to believe that he said it. We love this English freedom. We love to think how Alfred smiled on young freedom in its cradle, when it was born here and tended by its rude but fond nurses, our old Saxon forefathers. It had rough usage, many a time, after Alfred's death. Sometimes one royal tyrant tried to stab it in the back, and sometimes another strove to plant the dagger in its loins; but none could give the fatal blow. Yet it was often down on one knee, and sometimes down on both; and more than once it was prostrate. It must have had a good constitution—for it always contrived to get up, and stand well on its legs again. And, in its manly youth, Hampden took it by the right hand, and led it into the triumphant battle-field; and Milton sang inspiring and exultant songs in its

ear ; and now it has risen up to stalwart manhood—for there is no freedom like ours in the world. What? not American freedom? No ; not American freedom. Thank God, the poor negroes are no longer slaves by law ! But do white men really treat them as equals?

“Give them time !” some of you cry out. Well, I am willing to give white men time to lose their dislike to blacks—for I’m sure they’ll need it. But give me English freedom above all the freedoms in the world. I wish the poor French could get freedom and keep it. But although their statesmen utter so many high-sounding words about men’s equality, there never arises a William Gladstone among them, to say, when pleading for the franchise for working men, “Are they not our own flesh and blood?”

I know the Tories sneered and jeered at those words ; but they were words that caused my heart—the heart of the old Chartist prisoner—to cleave to that man. They were such words as no prime minister had ever uttered in England before ; but words that proclaimed the time had come when all should understand what noble equality there is in our British freedom.

Let us cling to it, fellow-countrymen ; let us be jealous over it, and proud of it ; but, above all, let us be thankful for it—thankful that God strengthened the hearts of our forefathers who went to the stake, and the block, and the prison

for it ; and wrestled and struggled for it, and built it up so strongly that we do not fear its fall.

But what about Alfred? The happy reply is that he was a Christian king, and a pious sovereign. After that hard struggle with the Danes, and he was hoping, at length, that peace would fill his realm, the news came that another flight of "the ravens," as they called the Danes, was expected to arrive soon. "Then let us," said Alfred to his ministers, "have God's book translated into the people's own tongue, so that if these pagans land in greater numbers and burn all our books,"—as they had already burned so many—"the people may have the book by heart. And then, if the Danes burn all the books they cannot burn the truth." And Alfred's own biographer assures us that the king translated half the Book of Psalms into Saxon with his own royal hand : that was Alfred's contribution towards a translation for his people to read.

My friends, you cannot help feeling with myself, that as our enquiry proceeds the interest increases. It is important for you and me to know for ourselves that our religion is true ; but our religion is the religion of Alfred, it is the religion of Wyckliffe, and Latimer, and Lord Bacon, and John Milton, and Oliver Cromwell, and Sir Isaac Newton. It is the religion of these and others, the most illustrious men of our English lineage. Where did it

come from—we ask again,—this religion of Alfred? He believed, and his Anglo-Saxon people believed, that Jesus of Nazareth had really existed on this earth, had been baptised of John in the Jordan, had chosen his twelve apostles, had preached his great doctrines, had wrought his mighty miracles, had been crucified, and had risen again from the dead. How came Alfred and his people, and so many millions of the people of Europe, to be believing all this in the ninth century? Was not the human life of Jesus a fact, and is not our common history of him a series of facts? Or is the whole story of him only the old fable of the sun refashioned? Let us step on to the Arch of the Bridge of History before the arch of Alfred, and see if we find Christianity there.

XII. What shall we name the Eighth Century? We can only give it one name—the great regal and imperial name of the middle ages; we must call it the ARCH OF CHARLEMAGNE. He is often called the “founder of feudalism,” whether he deserves the name or not; and was ruler of France and a large part of Germany and Italy. His mode of “converting” some of the rude tribes of Germany to Christianity was anything but a Christian mode. He compelled the Saxons on pain of death to receive baptism; and put thousands of them to death because they would not give up their beloved leader Witikind. But he must have been a man of

large mind, for he denounced the worship of images, which the Empress Irene cajoled Pope Adrian to encourage; and he, like Alfred, thought that the people ought to have the Scriptures to read. And having determined on the gift of a translation to his Frankish subjects, he sent all over Europe for men who were skilled in Greek and Hebrew, in order to make his translation as perfect as possible. From our own land went Alcuin, the learned Anglo-Saxon, to render assistance in this work, and he remained in France as one of the most valued advisers of Karl the Great—or Charlemagne.

There is a little fact in chronology which all of you will be able to remember. Just at our end of this arch of the bridge, that end of the arch which is nearest ourselves, that is to say, on Christmas-day in the year of our Lord 800, this Charlemagne was crowned by the Pope, and in a way that looked like a sudden inspiration, Emperor of the West. It was a signal act in history, for it was the cause of another act still more signal. Charlemagne in return made the Pope a temporal prince, and the Popes have been temporal monarchs ever since. The Pope's temporal monarchy is indeed a very little one now. It is confined to that small part of the city of Rome which is divided from the larger part by the Tiber, and which contains the Cathedral of St. Peter, with the Vatican Palace, and the Castle of St. Angelo; and which was proudly named after

himself by one of the numerous Popes called Leo, "the Leonine city."

Whether even this very small mockery of a monarchy will remain to the wearer of the triple crown is problematical. My friends, they say we should not rashly interpret the Divine judgments, but I think that mind must be dull indeed that does not perceive Divine judgments to have fallen on two devoted and guilty heads in our day. No sooner had "the man of sin, who exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God ;" no sooner had the poor old infatuated Pius the Ninth perfected the Papal blasphemous assumption by getting the Œcumenical Council to declare him "Infallible," than down comes, first, his rotten supporter, amidst the awful squelch at Sedan, and next, down comes the poor old helpless "Infallible" himself.

God's true Church was a persecuted and suffering Church in the eighth century. Under the name of Bulgarians their passage is traced from the East, fleeing from cruel persecutors, towards those valleys of the Alps and borders of the Pyrenees where their successors in faith and suffering were known as Waldenses, and Albigenses, and Paterines, and Cathari, and many other names.

Pursuing our main enquiry, we ask how came Charlemagne and the people of France and Germany



and Italy, and other parts of Europe—how came the Empress Irene, and the people of Constantinople and the adjoining regions—how came the lowly and persecuted people professing Christianity, to be believing, in the eighth century, that Jesus of Nazareth had lived on this earth, taught, and wrought His miracles upon it, and had been crucified at Jerusalem, and had risen again from the dead? Are we to conclude that none of these events have any foundation in fact, but that they are only refashionings of the old fable of the sun? Let us march again over our Bridge of History, and see if we find the Christian religion on the arch before the Arch of Charlemagne. In this instance the larger demands of general history direct us to find something else there first.

XIII. What shall we call the Seventh Century? I say the demands of general history direct us to call it the ARCH OF MOHAMMED. No one doubts that Mohammed was a really existing human person, a native of Arabia; that, although born of a lofty race, he became poor, and drove the camels of a rich widow to the fairs of Syria, where he heard and witnessed the quarrels of Jews, Christians, and Pagans; and that this set him upon the project of devising a religion which should end all their quarrels in unity of worship. No one doubts those well-known incidents of the history of Mohammed; that he began, after his marriage with the rich

widow, and emancipation from poverty, to retire to a cave, and profess to have visions of the Angel Gabriel, and to receive revelations which he embodied in writing, as parts of the future Koran. That his first attempts at assuming the character of Prophet were unsuccessful ; and that he fled to another part of the country, and instead of trying to bring over the Jews addressed himself to the Pagan Arabs, by whom his cause was taken up with enthusiasm—are also historical events respecting which there is no doubt.

I need not dwell more at length on the history of Mohammed. I remember to have been asked more than once by doubters, Whether it be not as difficult to account for the spread and existence of Mohammedanism as it is to account for the spread and existence of Christianity? I very readily answer, "No." Because, while the religion of Christ is a religion of meekness and love and self-denial, the religion of Mahommed is most powerfully adapted to captivate the two great passions of the human mind : the love of conquest, and the love of sensual enjoyment.

At one period in history it looked as if Mohammedan conquest would be universal, but the Almighty Hand stayed it, and now Mohammedanism is a declining religion, and a declining power in the world. But what said Mohammed of Christianity? Did he say it was only the old fable of

the sun in a new form? Nay; he proclaimed that God had sent three great prophets into the world before himself: Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, the son of Mary; that Jesus proclaimed "the Comforter" should come; and that he, Mohammed, was the Comforter. It is not likely that there is a single Mohammedan in the world who doubts that Jesus lived on earth, and wrought miracles.

We must not forget the existence of the sect called Paulicians, in this century. Although charged with the old Oriental errors included in Manichœism, it is clear they were Pauline Christians—Christians who defended the purity of their views by appealing to the writings of St. Paul. They were sufferers by persecution to such a degree that they began to quit Armenia, and to take refuge in Europe. They were the predecessors of the Bulgarians, Waldenses, Albigenses, Paterines, Hussites, and Lollards. Gibbon clearly shows the "line of descent"—so to call it—of pure and persecuted Christianity; and he was charged with mistake until Guizot went over all his authorities, and confirmed Gibbon's valuable statement.

Following my own bent for connecting our chief enquiry as much as possible with our dear old England, I would have preferred to call this seventh century the ARCH OF VENERABLE BEDE. If you, young men, were to make some actual search for antiquarian proofs of the existence of the Christian

religion, you could scarcely fail to do what I have done—visit Jarrow, on the banks of the Tyne. There are the crumbling remains of the monastery in which Bede studied. In a room of the adjoining church they show you Bede's chair, or what remains of it. There is no reason to doubt that the chair was used by Bede, nor the tradition that he died a few moments after quitting it, having pronounced the last words of his translation of St. John's Gospel, and then having fallen on his knees and breathed out his soul in prayer !

If, afterward, you were to visit the ancient castle of Durham, you might see, what I have seen twice, a more remarkable curiosity than the chair of Bede. What is it? say you. A large coffin, hewed out of the bole of an oak, and standing on four oak wheels. That was the coffin of St. Cuthbert at one time, and also of Bede his teacher ; for they dug up the body of Bede at Jarrow, and placed it beside the body of St. Cuthbert ; and their custom was, in those "dark ages," as they are justly called, to wheel that coffin about in the petty battles of the Heptarchy, with the belief that the sanctity of the persons to whom the bodies had belonged would bring them victory? "Dark ages!" Was the darkness really greater than in our age? Men thank God for victory now, and do not pretend to win it by any sanctity whatever, either of their own or other people's.

Again, I say, if you, young Englishmen, were disposed to make actual search for antiquarian proofs of the existence of Christianity in your own land, you might visit Whitby, on the east coast of Yorkshire, and see the grand ruins of the abbey on that lofty rock, near the German Ocean, and call to mind that they stand near the spot where the first religious house in those parts was built by the Lady Hilda, the Saxon princess, whose name is so familiar for her piety, prayer, and almsgiving, to even the poorest along the neighbouring shores of Durham and Yorkshire, to this day.

Lastly, if you were to travel north, as if you meant to reach Scotland, keeping still by the German Ocean, long before you come to Berwick-on-Tweed you would see in the sea a considerable islet, "The Holy Isle," or Lindisfarne, as it is also called. On that Isle you would see the ruins of the monastery in which Cuthbert studied.

Now, what I want to impress on your minds is, not the notion that there is any sanctity or spiritual value in the objects you would see. I am not a teacher of Popery, you know. But what I want to impress upon your minds is this thoughtful conclusion : a man looking upon that chair of Venerable Bede might as well deny that he sees a chair at all; a man looking upon that grotesque coffin of Cuthbert, on its wheels, might as well deny that there are either coffin or wheels before his eyes; a man

gazing upon those striking ruins on the rock of Whitby might as well deny that there are any Abbey ruins there at all ; and a man looking on the "Holy Isle" off the coast of Northumberland might as well deny that he sees it, or that it exists—as for a man to deny that Bede and Cuthbert and Hilda existed, and that they believed in Jesus Christ's existence and miracles, and death and resurrection, and taught that these were facts, in the seventh century, on English soil.

The lives of Bede and Cuthbert and Hilda are a part of the history and existence of the soil. One might as well doubt that the soil itself existed as that the actors existed whose existence is so indubitably attested. The body of Cuthbert, in its leaden coffin, was dug up and reinterred but a few years ago ; the mind of Bede exists, in the Church History and other works of his that remain ; and the spirit of Hilda exists in the remembrance of her goodness.

Where, again, I ask, did the Christian religion come from ? How came Bede and Cuthbert and Hilda, and thousands besides in our own land, and how came millions in other lands, to be believing, in the seventh century, that Jesus of Nazareth lived on this earth, chose his twelve apostles, taught his great doctrines, performed his miracles, was crucified, and rose again from the dead ? Are none of these facts ? Are they no more than so many items

in the new fable fashioned upon the old fable of the sun? Let us once more pursue our forward, or rather backward, march, and see if we find the Christian religion in existence upon that Arch of our Bridge of History which stands before the ARCH OF MOHAMMED, or, as we would prefer to term it, the ARCH OF VENERABLE BEDE.

XIV. What shall we call the Sixth Century? We will call it the ARCH OF AUGUSTINE and the Christianisation of England; for we will not be drawn into the current of general history this time, but pursue our inquiry as closely as possible with historic materials on English land. I need utter but few words to remind you how the first Pope Gregory—for there have been many of them—before he was Pope, saw the beautiful children of the Angles offered for slaves in the market at Rome, and thought they should be called Angels; and how he strove to go to England himself as a Christian missionary, but was peremptorily recalled by the Pope of that time; and how the good man (for the first Pope Gregory *was* a good man, a good Christian man, who disclaimed universal lordship over the Church, and never dreamt of being “infallible”)—how the good man, when he became Pope, sent out Augustine, with twenty monks and twenty priests, as missionaries to the Anglo-Saxons; how Augustine and his companions landed on Thanet, and sent their message to Ethelbert, the

King of Kent ; and how Ethelbert agreed to listen to the preaching of Augustine.

Fancy the picture, as Venerable Bede presents it in his history : The King, sitting under an oak, on a plain, surrounded with his chiefs, and the procession approaching ! First, one bearing aloft a silver cross ; then another with a picture of the Crucifixion on wood ; then Augustine, at the head of his monks, taller by the shoulders than any of the rest of his company ; and then the monks and priests chaunting. Augustine preaches, another interprets, while the King listens. He calls it " All very good " at the end, but intimates that he cannot change his religion all at once. He did change his religion, however ; but I much doubt whether the preaching of Augustine caused the change. I rather think it was the sweeter preaching he had at home from the lips of Bertha, his young queen. She was the daughter of Charibert, the King, or Duke, of Paris—for there was no kingdom of France then, such as we understand by the name now—and she was a Christian.

More missionaries were sent over by the good Gregory—I would rather that he was called Gregory the Good than " Gregory the Great," the name he wears in history ; and the men of Kent were immersed in baptism, like their King ; and the Christian missionaries, in the lapse of years, visited all Angle-land, and our forefathers were baptized in



the streams, or at the font, and gradually adopted the profession of Christianity. And our Anglo-Saxon ancestors ceased to worship the sun on Sunday, and the moon on Monday, and Tuisco on Tuesday, and Woden on Wednesday, and Thor—with the mighty hammer, the god of thunder—on Thursday, and Freya, the wife of Woden, on Friday, and Seater on Saturday ; and began to worship Christ.

We preserve the old idols' names in our days of the week. How incongruous it is, when we think upon it ! And yet people jeer the good Quakers when they say First Day, Second Day, and so on, instead. The Quaker custom is more rational than ours, nevertheless, if we really be Christians. Perhaps we could *not* change the names if we were to try ; it is so very difficult to change either old customs or old names. There is one thing we can do, however, whenever we use the old idols' names to distinguish the days of the week. We can let it serve to remind us of the rock from whence we were hewn, and the pit from whence we were digged. We can let it serve to remind us that our old forefathers were rude heathens ; but God sent them the good news of Christ, and gave them grace to receive the good news, and has preserved His holy religion among us to the present day.

But, again I ask, where did Christianity come from ? How came Gregory the Good to be caring

about heathen peoples getting a knowledge of it, and to be zealously sending out missionaries to spread it, in the sixth century? The mind of Gregory remains in such of his writings as we have, and we cannot doubt that he believed in the veritable existence of Jesus, and in the Gospel history. How came Gregory and Augustine, and millions of people, to be believing, in the sixth century, that Jesus of Nazareth really lived on earth, taught His doctrine of love and forgiveness of injuries, and purity and self-denial, performed His miracles, was crucified, and rose again from the dead? Were none of these facts? Is what we call the History of our Saviour Jesus Christ only a refashioning of the old fable about the sun? Let us again step on, in our journey over this Bridge of History, and see if we find a belief in Christianity held by the people who dwell on the arch preceding the Arch of Augustine and the Christianisation of England.

XV. What shall we call the Fifth Century? As I called the tenth century the Arch of Darkness, I would call the Fifth Century the ARCH OF EARTHQUAKE; for, of all the centuries that have elapsed since the Christian Era commenced, it was the most signal for invasion, revolution, tribulation, and change. Alaric the Goth scowls upon us at the beginning of the century, but, at the end of its first decade, has his strange burial in the bed of a river, so that where he lies is not known to this

day. Then the more dreadful Attila the Hun glares upon us, and he fights the great battle of Chalons-sur-Marne—the very Chalons on whose vast camp the retreat of the French army was announced just before that contemptible snuff-out of Napoleon the Little at Sedan ! To Attila unnumbered hosts of Goths and Visigoths and Franks and Saxons and Burgundians were opposed at Chalons, in the year 451, and they beat him. But he rushed down upon Italy and spoiled its fair cities. Next he meant to sack Rome, had not the aged bishop, St. Leo, persuaded him to accept large treasure and depart; but, soon after, the “Eternal City,” as we call it, was given up to fourteen days’ ruinous plunder by Genseric and his Vandals.

The Western Empire is, at length, broken up, in 476 ; and the formation of what we call Modern Europe begins. Spain becomes a kingdom under the Visigoths ; part of France owns Clovis for king ; Odoacer and Theodoric are kings of Italy ; our Saxon Heptarchy is founded ; and the Normans enter France.

Christianity itself, in this century, seems as much subject to revolution as the political world. Arianism is at war with orthodoxy, and often, for a time, tramples it down. Persecution and mutual persecution were rife ; the rival sects revelled in slaughter, as they happened to be uppermost. The war of words was as prevalent as bodily combat ; for it

was the age of Augustine and Pelagius, and of Jerome and Cyril and Chrysostom. Still it is evident, from even the stormy literature of the time, that "pure and undefiled" Christianity was not extinct.

Where did Christianity come from? we ask again. How came Augustine and Pelagius to be debating about the doctrines Christ taught if He never taught any? How came Jerome and Cyril to be contending for what they believed to be the truths that Christ taught if Christ never lived? Were the eloquent sermons of John, the "golden mouthed," or Chrysostom, founded on texts which Christ never spoke? How came millions of men, amidst all the contention and violence and sweeping change of that fifth century to be holding fast to these facts: that Jesus of Nazareth had lived on this earth, chosen His apostles, and preached His doctrines and performed His miracles, and been crucified, and had risen again from the dead? How came all this strong belief into men's minds in that fifth century? Was it all misplaced? Did Jesus never live, preach, die, and live again on this earth? Is what we call the Gospel History all founded on an old fable about the sun? Let us again proceed on our march over this Bridge of History. Shall we find Christianity in existence on the arch before that which we have just called the Arch of Earthquake?

XVI. What shall we call the Fourth Century? We can only call it by one name, unfortunately—the ARCH OF CONSTANTINE THE GREAT. A man might as well doubt the existence of Constantinople as doubt the facts of the history of Constantine. Yonder is the city still bearing his name: the city into which he admitted temple or church for no worship but Christian worship. A man might as well doubt the existence of the arch of Constantine at Rome as doubt that the Emperor lived and reigned, in whose honour it was erected and whose name it bears. A man might as well doubt the existence of the coins of Constantine as to doubt the facts of his history.

Young men who hear me, if you know of any one who has a good collection of coins, ask for the coins of Constantine, and mark them well. There are thousands of his bronze coins in existence; but it will be better to see the gold and silver coins, which are not so numerous. You will find that the earlier coins of Constantine have the pagan marks upon them, like the coins of the Cæsars; but, when you come to the later coins of Constantine, there is the Christian cross—there is the *labarum*, or standard, which was borne by Constantine's armies, with the cross and also the monogram of the word "Christ" upon it.

"I suppose this Constantine, the first Roman emperor who openly patronized Christianity, was a good man," says some one of my audience.

I fear I must tell you, very plainly, you are under a mistake, my friend. I must tell you that, although Constantine was a clever man, a skilful general, and a sagacious statesman, he was a bad man—for he murdered his wife, his eldest son, and his nephew ; and it seems that he would unhesitatingly have taken the heart's blood of man or woman who dared to oppose his will.

"Then how came this bad man to patronize Christianity?" you ask. The answer is, For political purposes,—“reasons of state,” as we say.

“But could the number of professing Christians be so great at that time as to form a body of sufficient importance to attract the notice of Constantine, and lead him to suppose he could strengthen himself by patronizing them?” it may next be asked.

Let us enquire of history. We will not take the enumeration from church historians. Their account might be questioned, or be suspected of exaggeration. We will take the account from the enemy's side, rather. Let us take it from the sceptical Gibbon, from his splendid “Decline and Fall.” He was an acute and tasteful scholar, and a master of statistical investigation ; and he assures us that at the time when Constantine first extended his “protecting” and patronizing hand towards Christianity—that is to say, in the year 313—the population of the entire Roman empire was 120 millions,

and that the Christian population was about a twentieth part of the whole; that is to say, there were six millions of professing Christians in the world in the year 313.

“And how came Constantine to think of patronizing these six millions of people?” it will be asked. Let us look at his circumstances, and we shall soon be able to read his motives.

Constantine became emperor at York, the Roman capital of England, on the death of his father, Constantius Chlorus, who was one of four ruling emperors. For Diocletian had invented a new form of government: a government by *four* emperors, who should divide the kingdom among them, but act unitedly. To Constantius Chlorus, Britain and Gaul were assigned, as the fourth part of the empire, to be ruled by him. At his death, the Roman soldiers hailed his son Constantine as his successor. But Constantine knew that none of the other emperors liked him. Yet he was determined to hold imperial power. So he set out from Britain, taking with him as many soldiers as could be spared from the country, and marched through Gaul also, soon learning that he would have to fight for it as he approached Italy.

He won a victory over the Emperor Maxentius; and some of the Christian historians would have us believe he adopted Christianity because he saw the sign of the cross in the air, and considered it the

symbol and promise of victory. But the true reasons why he began to patronize Christianity were more worldly. He needed military strength. The forces he had were not sufficient to cope with the larger armies of the other emperors. Now, he reflected on the conduct of the few Christian soldiers which were in his army. They were sober, honest, brave, intrepid; and he wished he could have more such moral material to work up into soldiers. Then, again, he learned, all the way he came through Gaul, that, in spite of the cruellest persecution, the Christians were increasing. He discerned that the support of such people politically, and the union of their sons with his army, were very desirable things to bring about.

The decree at Milan, in the year 313, proclaiming full toleration for Christians, was his statesman-like manoeuvre, and it succeeded. He persuaded Licinius, one of the emperors, who had married his daughter, to join him in this decree—though Licinius was not in earnest in his support of it. Diocletian retired from actual sovereignty, and Constantine was soon at war with the remaining emperor, Maximian. The suicide of Maximian left Constantine and Licinius masters of the empire. But a deadly war soon arose between them; Licinius was killed; and Constantine became sole sovereign of the Roman empire, and master of the destinies of 120 millions of people.



He now more openly and avowedly supported Christianity; but although he held the imperial power twenty-four years after he issued that first decree of toleration, he was not a baptized Christian till a few days before his death. Yet, as he was believed to be on the Christian side, even when he seemed to waver—and that was often—thousands who cared nothing about religion in their hearts, affected to espouse it, because it was the strongest side, so that there soon grew to be more millions of professors—I did not say *possessors*—of Christ's religion. Constantine's wily patronage of the Christian teachers also did much to ~~strengthen his power~~, while it tended to ruin the Christian church spiritually. And the more decided he became in uniting the religion with the state, the more he injured it.

It was, indeed, an evil day for Christianity when the crafty Constantine took it under his protection. Would that it had ever remained under the protection of God alone, whatever its professors might have suffered! Christ said to the Roman governor, when crucifixion was so near, "My kingdom is not of this world." O that his professed followers had always kept the solemn saying in mind! The Church and the State are unnatural companions. Tie Religion to the State chariot, and it becomes defiled by being dragged through the mire of expediency: make Religion co-rider with the State, in

the chariot, and she loses the spirit of the Cross, amidst the smiles of adulation and the corruptions of human power and grandeur. The change in the outward fortunes of Christianity, under Constantine and his successors, seemed to render the solemn declaration of Christ a mockery. Under successive emperors it grew grand, and when they encouraged the swelling pomp it grew grander still. At length, under the Popes, as we have seen in our journey over this Bridge of History, it became at once gorgeous and cruelly intolerant and murderous.

We are living at a time when nearly every circle of society in England is intent on the great question of the Union of Church and State. I must declare myself a separatist. It is not that I see nothing to love and nothing to admire in what we call our Established Church of England. I know and love some of her pious ministers ; I honour her noble army of martyrs ; I look with wonder and reverence at her grand library of authors ; I love many of her printed prayers ; and I trust, when I die, her sublime burial-service will be read at my humble funeral ; but I neither admire the wisdom nor honesty of her ritualistic sons ; nor do I admire the swelling style nor titles of her chief officers, nor their political employment. I never think of the speeches and votes of the Bishops in the House of Lords, but I call to mind the saying of an old

Lincolnshire farmer, Philip Skipworth, one of the most Radical tenants of the first Earl of Yarborough. "Woe worth your lord bishops!" he used to exclaim; "I wish they would come out of the House of Lords, and be oftener in the Lord's House!"

→ And as for the styles and titles of the "spiritual  
→ peers," as they are called, where is the Scripture warrant for it all? That Popes, all along, have had the impudence to wear the highest style and title on their coins of the pagan priests of old Rome and call themselves *Pontifex Maximus*, one does not wonder; but where is the New Testament warrant for describing an English Protestant Bishop as "The Right Reverend Father in God, Samuel, by Divine permission, Lord Bishop of Winchester," etc., etc.? Pray, in what chapter or verse of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, do you read of "The Right Reverend Father in God, Peter the Fisherman, by Divine permission, Lord Bishop of Rome, Primate of all Italy," etc.? In what chapter and verse of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, do you read of "The Most Reverend Father in God, Paul the Tentmaker, by Divine permission, Lord Archbishop of Tarsus, Primate and Metropolitan of all Judea," etc., etc.? In what chapter or verse of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, do you read of "The Very Reverend Father in God, Matthew the Publican, Dean of Jerusalem, Canon of Jericho, and Rector of Cesarea Philippi?"

My friends, in this our journey so far we have never found *real* Christianity robed in worldly grandeur; but we have often found it lowly and persecuted and suffering, and thus resembling its Divine Founder.

But let us keep our chief enquiry in mind. In the year 313, when Constantine began to patronise Christianity, it was not then three hundred years old, according to the Christian belief—which was, that its Founder did not leave the earth till the year 33. Now the time of Constantine was a time of considerable civilization; and it could not be much more difficult for the Romans to ascertain the truth of what was stated to have occurred in Palestine in the year 33, that is to say, but two hundred and eighty years before, than it would be for us to ascertain what occurred in France or Spain two hundred and eighty years ago: that is to say, in the reign of our Elizabeth, when the intercourse of Englishmen with those countries was so great. We have no difficulty in grappling the perfect reality of that period of history; and why should it have been less possible for Romans to realize the verity of the Gospel History but two hundred and eighty years after the crucifixion?

But we are bound to repeat our question, Where did Christianity come from? How came six millions of people to be professing it in the year 313? How came those books of Christian authors

—Lactantius, and Eusebius, and Athanasius, and Basil, and Gregory Nazianzen, and Ambrose—that have come down to us, to be written in the fourth century? How often we might have asked a similar question respecting scores of writers, while standing on the preceding arches of our Bridge, if the time would have permitted us! But were Eusebius, and Lactantius, and Ambrose, and the rest, dreamers? Did Jesus of Nazareth never really live on this earth—never teach his doctrines—never perform his miracles—never die by crucifixion—never rise from the dead? Was the mind of the subtle Constantine under complete delusion when he presided over three hundred Christian bishops at the Council of Nice, in 325, and when he was baptized as a Christian in 337? Is the religion we call Christianity simply a readaptation to human credulity of the old fable of the sun? Let us again pursue our journey over the Bridge of History, and see if we discover the existence of Christ's religion on the arch before the Arch of Constantine.

XVII. What shall we call the Third Century? We must call it the ARCH OF PERSECUTION. Before Diocletian gave up power, and retired to cultivate cabbages at Salona, he exercised his mind in the more pernicious task of ordering a search to be made for all Christian books, that they might be publicly burnt. If the books were given up by

professing Christians—for none else had them—at the imperial demand, the persons who gave them up were put out of its pale by the Christian Church of that time.

I want you to let that fact sink into your minds, and I want you to keep it there, for we shall have to remember it when we come to the keener points of our enquiry. To be more willing to part with life itself than with the Gospels or Epistles was held to be the mark of an earnest Christian in those days. The books were found, in numerous instances, by the emperor's searchers ; and those who withheld them were punished.

Diocletian did greater evil still. He commanded Christian places of worship to be closed or torn down ; and then the professors of the forbidden religion had to worship in caves and desolate places, or by the sea-side, and often in darkness. And then their enemies invented the malicious report that they met together for vicious purposes. Just like the devil, you know ! when he thrusts a good man into a dark, dirty corner, he cries out, " That fellow has gone there for concealment in his vicious indulgence ! " But the busy instrument of Satan, Diocletian, went further : he proceeded to take human life. Eusebius collects the accounts of contemporary writers, and presents us with their catalogues of the martyrdoms in Egypt, in Palestine, in Syria, and Arabia, but more especially in the

great cities of Alexandria, and Antioch, and Nicomedia, and Cæsarea. Some of those accounts are very affecting; and often the Christian martyrs met death with a heroism that appalled their persecutors. Maximian and Galerius, whom Diocletian associated with himself in the government, were as cruel as their patron.

Before Diocletian and his associates in imperial rule we have Aurelian, Valerian, Gallus, Decius, Maximin, and Severus, who were all persecutors of Christianity. They did not persecute at all times, nor in every place; but after a little lull of the tempest it would break forth again, and not only aged men, but feeble women, were swept away in its fury. Indeed, the relation of the persecution undergone by the Christian Church in the third century is often too painful to read. Tender women, in some instances, were tortured several days, and put to death by slow degrees, for the purpose of wringing from them a denial of Christ; some, in their human weakness, were affrighted by the threats of punishment and those cruel sights which they witnessed, and shrunk from martyrdom, by apostasy; but hundreds triumphed and exulted in death, and to the last attested their faith in Christ.

I ask once more, Where did Christianity come from? Was there nothing in it worth suffering for? Did Jesus of Nazareth never exist? Was he not

alive, teaching in Jerusalem, in Galilee, in Samaria, and performing his miracles, but 220 years before many of these martyrs suffered? Was he never crucified at Jerusalem? Did he never rise from the dead? Were all these martyrs suffering for their belief in a new fable about the sun; and because the believers in the old fable hated them for refashioning the fable? Let us again journey along our Bridge of History, and see if we find at last the solution to our oft-repeated question.

XVIII. and XIX. We have now but two centuries remaining : the second and the first. What shall we call these remaining arches of our Bridge of History? I propose that we call the Second Century the ARCH OF THE FATHERS, and the First Century the ARCH OF THE APOSTLES.

I propose now that we take our steps more slowly, and very circumspectly. If we miss the object of our search through haste, our journey will have been spent in vain, and our time thrown away. "The Arch of the Fathers—pray, who really were the Fathers of the Church, as they are called?" some of you will ask. The reply is that they were the believing writers on the facts of the Christian history, and the teachers of its doctrines, from the time of the last of the Apostles to about the seventh century. Some called Theophylact, who lived in the tenth century, the last of the Fathers; but after the time of the first Pope Gregory,



—Gregory the Good, as I have called him—you may consider the catalogue closed. And of these, the Fathers who lived and wrote in the second and third centuries are the most important to our enquiry.

You will see how important the memory of the Fathers is to us when I rehearse to you the substance of a note on one of the pages of a biography that you young Christian men should read—the Lives of the Haldanes. The brothers Haldane were wealthy Scottish gentlemen, at the beginning of the present century, who became evangelically pious, and performed great and good service in the Christian world. The note I refer to in that book relates how Dr. Buchanan was dining with a literary party at the house of the father of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, the general who died in Egypt, when a gentleman in the company put this question to them: “If every copy of the New Testament had been destroyed at the end of the Third Century,”—for it was *then*, you will remember, when Diocletian was engaged in his nefarious attempt to extinguish the book—“whether it could have been recovered again from the extracts made from it in the works of the Fathers of the Second and Third Centuries?” The question startled the company; but none could answer it. Two months afterwards, Dr. Buchanan says he called on Sir David Dalrymple, or “Lord Hales,” as he was called, the Scotch judge; and he pointed to a table covered

with books and papers, and said, "Look at these! You remember the strange question about the Fathers and the New Testament which was put by one of the company at Mr. Abercrombie's, two months ago?" Dr. Buchanan said he remembered it well. "That question roused my curiosity," said Sir David Dalrymple, "and as I knew I possessed all the extant Fathers of the second and third centuries, I commenced the search, and, up to this present time, I have found the entire New Testament all but *eleven verses!*"

Now, do you see the immense importance to us, in our enquiry, of a fact like that: that in the *extant* writings of the Fathers of the Second and Third Centuries the entire New Testament, except eleven verses, can be found in the form of quotations? Remember that we have lost many of the works of the Fathers of those centuries, and think the more of this important fact. What does it lead us to conclude? That the Christians of those centuries valued the New Testament very highly. Our Chillingworth says "the Bible is the religion of Protestants;" but the New Testament was the religion of the early Christian Church. They must have fed upon it as their daily and hourly spiritual food; they must have quoted it in their prayers and conversations, as well as in their letters, and sermons, and homilies, and commentaries; it must have been very precious to them.

Three of the most eminent of the Fathers were living within the last quarter of the second century—which will take us back to the year 175—a year that I want specially to fix in your memories. The Fathers I mean are Tertullian, Irenæus, and Clement of Alexandria.

Tertullian ascribes the Four Gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In his extant works he makes 2,500 references to the New Testament. 700 of these are references to the Gospels, and 200 of these again are to John's Gospel. He quotes from *every chapter* of Matthew, Luke, and John.

Irenæus also attributes the Four Gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In his extant works he makes 1,200 references to the New Testament; 400 of these are references to the Gospels, and 80 of these again are to John's Gospel.

Clement of Alexandria also calls the Four Gospels by the names of Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John—for *that* is the order in which he places the Evangelists. He makes 320 references to the New Testament in his extant works, which are few compared with those of Tertullian.

I said, just now, that I wished to impress the memory of the year 175 on your minds, and I want now to begin to show you the reason of it. Hitherto we have been keeping in view but one of the theories devised by sceptical writers to account

for the existence of the Christian religion, while denying its truth ; the "Sun Theory" : that theory of Sir William Drummond, and Godfrey Higgins, and Dupuis, and Volney, which was popularised in London over forty years ago by the "Reverend" Robert Taylor, or, as Henry Hunt styled him, "the Devil's Chaplain." Let us now look at the more modern theory, which has destroyed the popularity of the Sun Theory with many of the sceptics of our own time : the "Mythical Theory" of Strauss and Renan ; for although there is a great difference in the spirit and manner of the German and French theorists, I think we may well consider them together.

In the year 1834 a book was published at Tübingen, by Dr. David Friedrich Strauss, a young professor in the University of that town, and, of course, a professor of the Lutheran faith. His book is usually known by a part of its German title : "Leben Jesu," or Life of Jesus ; but its complete title, "Das Leben Jesu bearbeitet," means,— "The Life of Jesus critically worked at : " an odd title to give to a book. Only a very few years ago, you know, the other "Life of Jesus"—the "Vie de Jesus" of M. Renan, Professor of Oriental History in the great French Academy—was issued. The theories of these writers—but chiefly, the "Leben Jesu" of Strauss—may be truthfully said to have fascinated thousands of minds, and to have

led away troops of young earnest students and thinkers on the continent, while they have also been detrimental to the faith of many in our own country.

And what is maintained by the teachers of this "Mythical Theory"? Do *they* say that no such person as Jesus of Nazareth ever existed? Oh no! They could not commit themselves to such rashness; for they are scholars in a high sense of the word. Renan is understood to be a profound Oriental scholar; and the classical attainments of Strauss are understood to be as great as his power of analysis. I need scarcely say that men of such intellectual calibre and acquirements know that they have no right to take up any ancient volume which professes to be history, and cross out any personal name in it that does not suit them, affirming that no such person ever existed. They know they might just as well and wisely affirm that Julius Cæsar never existed, or that Alexander the Great never existed, as that there never was such a human person as Jesus of Nazareth in the world.

No: they agree that such a person existed, at the time when, and in the country where, He is related, in the Gospels, to have existed. They agree that He was born of poor parents; but that He had naturally a large mind and a richly philanthropic heart: that He had a highly religious

mind, and had a strong belief in the ancient prophecy that the Messiah—the Great Deliverer—should come and regenerate the world and deliver it from error and evil : that He yearned over the sufferings of the poor, Himself ; and believed that His “ Heavenly Father ” would deliver the world from the wrong He saw in it and deplored. And they agree that He doated on this conception, and earnestly went forth proclaiming “ The Kingdom of Heaven—the Kingdom of God is at hand ! ”—and that, at length, He doated on this conception so deeply, and longed so fervently for its realization, that He came to believe Himself to be this Messiah !

It was, simply, an instance of that common procedure of the human mind wherein “ the wish is father to the thought ”—wherein we burn with desire to see a fact accomplished, until we persuade ourselves it *is* accomplished *in* ourselves ! Jesus, it is affirmed, did not arrive at this belief respecting Himself all at once ; but by degrees. During the course of His ministry, when He began to be regarded as a prophet, and, therefore, as possessed of miraculous powers, persons afflicted with various diseases were brought to Him that He might exercise His curative skill upon them. Strauss and Renan alike deny that any miracles were ever performed by Christ. There *are* no miracles—there *can be* no miracles, they affirm. It

is "unscientific" to believe in miracles. God governs by fixed laws. That is to say, He has fixed Himself: He can or will neither suspend nor transcend His own laws. He is like a great mechanist who has formed the universe as a splendid machine, and has wound it up, and left it to go by itself. He cannot or will not interfere with it! The "Laws of Nature" are *fixed* laws.

Perhaps some seeming cures were performed by Jesus of Nazareth, thinks Strauss; some seeming cures of comparatively slight disorders. The effect, perhaps, of what we now call mesmerism, or animal magnetism. In some instances, perhaps, these seeming cures were simply the effect of nervous sympathy on the part of the patient with this Jesus, who was so loudly reported to be a great healer of disease, by a touch, or by a word, or a look. The persons so considered to be cured passed into obscurity, and nothing more was known of them. But as mankind are naturally disposed to make a thing that is a little marvellous still more marvellous by talking about it—like the story of the Three Black Crows—so these seeming cures were magnified into real miracles.

Eventually this remarkable person was put to death. Well, reasons Strauss, there is nothing wonderful about that. Socrates was put to death. The truly great and good have been put to death in all ages. There is no wonder that when a man

risks up to beard wickedness in high places, he loses his life. If Jesus of Nazareth would persevere in reprehending the hypocritical and powerful Pharisees in the way that He did, there can be no wonder that they never rested till they had His heart's blood.

And what about Christ's resurrection from the dead? Oh, that is utterly incredible, according to Strauss and Renan. Christ never rose from the dead, any more than we shall rise from the dead. The fable of the resurrection arose from the simple credulity of a few weak women and ignorant men who were fondly attached to this Jesus of Nazareth. They loved their Master, for He had shown them great love and tenderness. They longed to see Him again; and, perhaps, in some moments of self-exultant thought He had uttered those words attributed to Him, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again!"—speaking of His own body; and so they were encouraged to expect His resurrection. First, one enthusiastic woman imagined she had seen Him again alive, and heard Him speak. Her story wrought on the imagination of others, till they, as fully as herself, believed they had also seen Him. And thus the women from Galilee and the disciples persuaded one another till they grew into a fervid band of Resurrection-Preachers, and persuaded thousands to believe in the Resurrection as



firmly as themselves. Nay, they continued to believe and continued to preach, until many of them laid down their lives in attestation of their belief in what they affirmed—that they had seen their Master after He rose again from the dead.

“And is this,” say you, “really the wonderful Mythical Theory of Strauss?” It is, indeed ; as wild as it seems for a man of such famed logical power to have invented it. Summed up, it means this : that the reason why upwards of 300 millions of human beings are now numbered among the professors of Christianity, the reason why the highest and wisest nations of the earth now profess this religion, and why millions upon millions have professed it in past centuries, is solely because a weak fanatical woman first imagined she saw Jesus in the garden where his sepulchre was, and that he spoke to her, yet she never saw him, and he never spoke to her at all ; and because the other women, her companions, set on by her example, also took to imagining that they met Christ, and he spoke to them, yet they never met him, and he never spoke to them at all ; and because ten men, in a room with the doors shut, all took to dreaming at the same time, with their eyes wide open, that the same Jesus whom they knew, and who had been crucified and buried, stood alive before them, and spake, and showed them the wounds in his hands and side ; and because, a week after, eleven men

took to dreaming in a similar way, and so on. A wild way of forming a theory, my friends, when you remember what the Apostles suffered for their belief in Christ, and preaching of Christ as the risen Saviour! Yet that is the meaning of the famed "Mythical Theory" of Strauss.

The "Mythical Theory," it may be observed, receives a few additions. When the "Messianic conception," as Strauss calls it (and it is a favourite phrase of his), had fully taken possession of Christ's disciples and their converts, they went on to imagine and set down to his account many and marvellous deeds he had never dreamt of performing. They reasoned, for instance, since he was really the Messiah, that he must have fulfilled his types. Well, Moses and Elijah were types of Christ, and they were related to have each fasted forty days and forty nights. So they set it down that Christ did the like, not from the spirit of falsehood, but from devout faith in the true Messiahship of Jesus. He must have fulfilled his types! Thus the catalogue of miracles grew, until it swelled to the size it now wears in our Gospels!

I want you now, if you please, to note well and fasten in your minds one remarkable fact as connected with the date A.D. 175, which I have already mentioned. It is this: that Strauss himself grants what every real scholar in the world grants, whether sceptical or Christian,—what Lord Bolingbroke,

among our old English freethinkers, grants,—as you may see in his “Letters on the Study of History,”—that the Four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, so called, were in the possession of the Christian Church at least as early as that year. That they were at that time in the Greek tongue, but that they contained the same accounts of miracles, parables, journeys, and other transactions and circumstances of the life of Jesus, as *our* Gospels contain at this day; and that they were held by the Christian Church of that time to be the authentic, the genuine, the veritable memoirs of their Master.

But, argues Strauss, no one knows *who* wrote these Gospels; nobody knows *where* they were written, or *when* they were written! Perhaps some of the disciples of this Jesus of Nazareth wrote some short accounts of him; but they never could have written books of the length and having the contents of *our* Gospels, for they never saw the miracles there related, since those miracles never were performed. They very likely wrote short accounts of a very simple character, and others added more marvellous stories to these simple accounts; and so the books grew larger by repeated additions, till the books became of the bulk and nature that we see they have now. And, insists Strauss, between the date A.D. 33, when this Jesus died, and A.D. 175, being 142 years, there is ample

time for the formation of these marvellous books, by successive accretions of the more marvellous ; there is ample time for the growth and expansion of the mythical element.

And you may see its growth, palpably, for yourself, asserts Strauss, if you will only slightly exert your critical faculty ; it is so very evident in the so-called Four Gospels. For instance, Jesus is affirmed generally in the Gospels to have raised the dead. But in the two earlier Gospels this is a very unimportant sort of act ; he enters a room where a maiden lies who had only just died, or was supposed to be dead, takes her by the hand, and recalls her to life, or seems to do so. When you get to the later-written Gospel called by the name of "Luke," Christ again is related to have raised the dead ; but this time it is a story of increased marvellousness : the widow's son of Nain had been dead some time, for he was being borne on a bier to the place of burial, and Christ recalls him to life. But how the mythical element has grown when you come to the Gospel said to have been written and published by John at the close of the first Christian century ! Jesus now raises to life Lazarus, a man who had not only been dead some time, but who had been four days in the tomb, and whose body, according to his own sister's account, must have been in a state of putrefaction ! You may thus trace out and detect for yourself the

mythical, the legendary, the fabulous character of a great part of the Four Gospels, declares Strauss ; and clearly satisfy yourself that they are unworthy of being received as a body of historical truth or fact.

These are strong blows to strike at a weak Christian ; strong blows to strike at the faith of a good but not very intelligent or well-informed man. Such a man is likely to regard a man of logic and learning with a degree of awe. And if the man of logic and learning tells him that he is cleaving for salvation to what is told him in a book that is unworthy of his belief—for nobody knows *who* wrote the Four Gospels, nobody knows *where* they were written, or *when* they were written—the blows are very likely to be too strong for him. These blows have knocked many a man down, to my certain knowledge : many a man who has never got up again.

But now let us take courage, my friends, and dare the weight of these blows. Let us examine for ourselves what the strong assertions of Strauss are worth.

“Nobody knows who wrote the Gospels.” What is the exact meaning of Strauss ? He cannot mean that they are anonymous books—books written without any authors’ names being attached to them, because he and the world know that they are called the “Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.”

Then what does he mean? Is it that, although the books are called by these names, we have no reason to think that they are the right names? Why? Who produces evidence that they are the wrong names? No one. Then why should we deem them the wrong names? How do we judge, and how do we believe, respecting the authorship of other ancient books: books written as early, and even earlier than the Four Gospels? What is the foundation for what we regard to be our true knowledge of the authorship of other ancient books? How do we know that Cæsar wrote the "Commentaries on the Gallic War"? How do we know that Virgil wrote the "Eneid"? I purposely select two of the best known, the most universally known, of ancient books. How do we know that Cæsar and Virgil are the true names of the authors of these books? How do we know? Because these are the names the books have borne ever since they were heard of. They have never been called by any other names. No sane person ever arose in the ancient time and said, "Cæsar was not the name of the person who wrote the 'Commentaries on the Gallic War'; the author's true name was so-and-so," any more than any sane man is to be found now who says that. No sane person ever arose in the ancient time and said, "Virgil is not the name of the poet who composed the 'Eneid'; the author's true name was so-and-so," any more

than any sane man is to be found now who says that. Scholars would regard a man as of unsound mind who asserted his belief that we did not know the true names of these, or of the other Latin classics generally.

Then why am I not to regard the names as equally certain when I turn to the Four Gospels? Just as I believe I am certain and sure when I say that Cæsar and Virgil wrote the "Commentaries" and the "Eneid," why am I not to feel equally certain and sure when I say that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the Gospels that bear their names? These are the authors' names that the Gospels have borne ever since they were heard of. They have never borne any other names. No person ever arose in the ancient time and said, "Matthew, surnamed Levi, was not the name of the man who wrote that Gospel: the man's real name was so-and-so," any more than a sceptic dares to arise now-a-days, and say, "Matthew write that book you call a 'Gospel'! no such thing: the name of the man who really did write that book was so-and-so." No person ever arose in the ancient time and said, "John, whose surname was Mark, was not the name of the man who wrote that book you call a 'Gospel': the man's real name was so-and-so," any more than a sceptic dares to arise now-a-days, and say, "Mark write that book you call a 'Gospel'! no such thing:

the real name of the writer of that book was so-and-so."

Now, why am I not to regard myself as certain and sure in the one case as in the other? I will suppose that I have an intelligent and candid sceptic present, and I will put the case to him. What do *you* think I say to him, of the interrogatory parallel, or duplicate question, I put before you? What do you think of its fairness? Why am I not bound to believe as firmly in the one case as in the other?

"Fairness," he would reply, "fairness? No sensible or candid man can doubt the fairness of the parallel, or duplicate question you present to me. No doubt it is as fair on one side as on the other. I cannot deny its fairness. But then you know well enough that I do not believe in miracles, and so I do not believe the Four Gospels to be real history. Nay, furthermore, I am free to tell you that I do not believe your parallel, as you call it to be worth anything either on the one side or on the other. I tell you boldly that I do not think I am bound to believe, *absolutely*, that Cæsar wrote the 'Commentaries,' and Virgil wrote the 'Eneid,' if that be all the evidence you can give. I may not think it worth the trouble to deny either; but I certainly do not think I am bound to believe *absolutely*, if that be all the evidence you can give. You say these are the names by which



these books have always been called ever since they were heard of, and they have never been called by any other names. Well, that is only very loose and lean evidence, in my judgment. Names may be given to things without fact, and with only fancy to guide the givers.

“Now if you could give me *circumstantial* evidence of the authorship of these books, I should be bound to receive it. Circumstantial evidence carries with it full conviction to the minds of a jury when there is an utter absence of all positive and direct evidence. A man is on his trial for the crime of murder. There is not a single witness who can swear, ‘I saw him murder the man.’ There is not one who can swear to witnessing the direct and actual commission of the murder, or the striking of the blow that caused it. But the accused was known to have a deep quarrel with the murdered man ; was seen near to the scene of the murder close upon the time when it must have been committed ; and the witnesses who saw him noted his disordered look and manner, and soiled and torn dress. An instrument was found lying by the murdered man ; with that instrument the murder had evidently been committed : that instrument was stamped with the initials of the accused ; and there are witnesses who swear they had often seen it in his hands. Furthermore, the clayey soil where the murdered man was found

bore marks of a struggle, and a frequent footmark was noticed in the clay. The shoe of the accused fitted it exactly.

"This is what is termed 'circumstantial evidence,' and the jury say 'guilty,' when it has all been clearly laid before them; and they say it without hesitation. Now, can you give me circumstantial evidence—clear and substantial evidence of that nature?" demands the doubter. "You say Cæsar wrote the 'Commentaries on the Gallic War.' Now give me the circumstantial evidence.

"When did he begin to write them? You cannot tell me the exact year of his age, or the year of Rome. Could you answer the question in a looser and more general way? Did he begin to write the Commentaries before he crossed the Rubicon? or was it soon after? How old was he, and where was he living, when he finished the 2nd book, 'De Bello Gallico'? and how long afterwards did he finish the 5th book?

"You believe that Virgil wrote the 'Eneid.' Tell me where he began to write it. Was it at Mantua, his birthplace? Was it at Rome? Was it at Verona? or can you name some other city in Italy, and assure me that *there* Virgil began to write the 'Eneid'? How old was he, and where, exactly, was he living when he finished the second book, the sixth, the tenth?"

The reply is that none of these questions can be

answered. Antiquity has not left us the means of answering them. Nor can such questions be answered with exactness respecting any book of antiquity that I am aware of. But if any one asks me for circumstantial evidence respecting the authorship of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, I tell him that it can be given with a length and breadth and strength that cannot be given for any other, even of the most highly-valued and most celebrated works of antiquity. I now entreat your close and wakeful attention to the circumstantial evidence for the authorship of the Four Gospels, while I endeavour to rehearse it in your hearing, as briefly and clearly as I can. I entreat you to give all your power of attention to the enquiry. It is a most vital one, for time and eternity, to you and me.

What is it, I ask again, that Strauss affirms? "Nobody knows who wrote the Four Gospels; nobody knows where they were written, or when they were written." I say, again, that when Strauss affirms that nobody knows who wrote the Gospels, he cannot mean that they are anonymous books—books without authors' names; he knows that they are called the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Then what does he mean? I ask again. Does he mean that, supposing they really are the right names, yet the names are worthless to us, for nobody knows who these

people were—they are mere men in the moon, there is no historical identity about them, there is nothing on record to connect them with the history they narrate, if it be a history? But if this be really what Strauss means, the simple reply is—*it is not true.*

1. Nobody knows who Matthew was! no historical identity about him! nothing on record to connect Matthew with the history that he narrates! Let us see. He is called 'Matthew the publican.' The *τελωναι*, publicans, or under-tax-gatherers, were chiefly Jews, and their countrymen did not like them to fill the office; it was held to be derogatory to the character of one of the chosen people of Jehovah to collect a tribute to be paid to their pagan conquerors; and they were called "publicans and sinners." The office and duty of the publican were to be present at his place of business at such hours of the day as were deemed proper, to receive the taxes—customs, or excise, as we should say—on taxable articles. He had, of course, to keep a full and correct account; he had to write down the name of the person who paid the tax, the name of the residence of that person, the date of the payment, the sum that was paid, the name of the taxed article, and its weight or measure. And he had to present the full and correct account, and to hand over the payment, either to some superior officer of the Roman

government, or to some person of rank who "farmed" the tax, as we say, either under the emperor or the Roman senate.

Now, a person who had these business qualities was a very likely person to write such a book as the Gospel called by his name. The Gospels are not, any of them, the composition of a Macaulay, or a Froude, or a Gibbon, a Hume, or a Robertson. They are not books of splendid rhetoric, of showy ornament, or studied periods. They are very plainly written books; and Matthew was a very likely person, we repeat, to write such a book as the Gospel which is called by his name. Likely! why, he is called to be a disciple; he is appointed one of the twelve apostles, and he makes a feast at his own house for Christ and his disciples, when he is appointed to be an apostle. Then, henceforth, he is with the Master. He sees the miracles which he describes in his Gospel. He hears the parables and that sermon on the mount which he reports for us. He can tell us, as an eye and ear witness, of the wondrous compassion of the Son of man for the wretched and the suffering, and of his healing power. He can relate to us, from personal experience, with what love and kindness Jesus conducted himself towards his disciples. He can assure us, from personal observation, of his gentleness to the poor and lowly, and his unflinching reprobation of the pride and hypocrisy of the

scribes and Pharisees. He can assure us how they persecuted him to death, and how one of his own chosen disciples betrayed him. He can describe the crucifixion and burial of Christ; and can present us with such facts as came to his knowledge and eye-sight respecting the resurrection of his Lord and Master.

Not know who Matthew was! No historical identity about him! Nothing to connect him with the history he narrates! Why he is just the historian we want; he is the very eye and ear witness we need. We do not want a mere literary man, lodging in a two-pair back somewhere in Jerusalem, and who steps out languidly now and then to gaze on the young "Prophet of Nazareth," through his eye-glass, amidst the crowds that shout "Hosanna to the Son of David!" in the narrow streets of the sacred city. We want our information—if we are to depend on it—from an earnest man who has companied with the Saviour, and felt the divine electricity of union with him in heart and soul; the thrill of wonder and awe at his miracles; the glow of love at his pity and goodness and gentleness. Matthew is the very man we want. Don't tell us that we know not who he was.

"But stop!" cries the objector; "remember, that supposing you have really established the historical identity of Matthew, shown who he was,

and his personal connection with the history that he writes—'history,' as you call it; remember that you cannot meet the two other challenges of Strauss, as to where they were written, and when they were written. How will you, or can you, meet these challenges with regard to Matthew? He does not inform you, in any part of his Gospel, where he wrote it, or when he wrote it." Perfectly undeniable. But such is the case with thousands of books. It is but rarely that the author himself, in his own book—except it be simply a biography of himself—tells us where he wrote the book, and when he wrote it; and it would have been an unusual and strange act if Matthew had done this in his Gospel history. It is not in Matthew's history of Jesus that we should look for such statements, any more than we should look into Hume's History of England, or Rapin's, or Henry's, or Macaulay's, or Froude's, for an account of the exact dates when they commenced the writing, and when they finished it, and the name of the place where they wrote.

But now I again solemnly challenge your thought and attention. Can any one of you suppose that that earnest Christian Church which put persons out of its pale when they gave up these Gospels to be burnt, at the demand of a persecuting emperor—that the members of the early Christian Church who quoted the New Testament in their

many of the apostles did not where they  
wrote them

conversation, their prayers, their letters, their sermons, their treatises, and lived upon what they believed to be the truths of the book—that the Christian Church, whose writers quoted these books so often that we can collect the whole New Testament, save eleven verses, from those works of theirs that remain, and were written in the second and third centuries, kept no record *where* these their beloved books were written, nor *when* they were written? The supposition would be absurd.

We can seldom have contemporary evidence of the authorship of a book when we go back to times long before our own. But when we have evidence close upon the time of the existence of an author, and this is fortified by evidence that thickens immediately after, we never think of doubting. In matters of this sort this is evidence of the highest kind. Now this is the kind of evidence we have for the authorship of Matthew's Gospel. The Fathers who knew the Apostles or their companions declare that Matthew wrote this Gospel, wrote it at Jerusalem, for the Christian Church there, a large but poor church, and therefore wrote it in their native dialect; and wrote it before the destruction of Jerusalem. Papias, the disciple of John and companion of Polycarp; Ireneus, the disciple of Polycarp; Origen, the disciple of Ireneus; and, after Origen, Eusebius,



Jerome, Cyril, Chrysostom, Augustine, and others, combine to give us this evidence.

That Matthew's Gospel was written at Jerusalem and for the Christian Jews may be considered certain, because he so often refers to Jewish customs, but never explains them; and so often quotes the Jewish Scriptures, seeming to keep the instruction of the Jews before his mind as his guiding thought. That Matthew's Gospel was written before the destruction of Jerusalem is evident, because he perpetually writes as if everything remained at Jerusalem as it was in Christ's lifetime. And Matthew, in our 24th chapter, seems no more to have understood that his Divine Master was prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem than did the rest of the apostles; but he must have understood it, had he recorded the prophecy *after* the destruction of Jerusalem, as clearly as we understand it now.

Matthew's professional employment, as being that of one who "handled the pen of the ready writer," would cause him to be looked to the earliest for such a task as a memoir of his Lord; and 'Memoirs' would seem to have been the early title of our Gospels, for Justin Martyr speaks of them frequently as 'Memoirs,' and only two or three times calls them Gospels. They seem to have soon lost the first title, for no one repeats it after Justin Martyr.

In concluding my observations on the First Evangelist, I think I shall be borne out in my affirmation by those who hear me, when I say there is no truth in the assertion of Strauss that no one knows who wrote the First Gospel, no one knows who Matthew was, nobody knows when it was written, or where it was written.

2. Let us now try the truth of the affirmation of Strauss, as applying to the authorship of the SECOND GOSPEL. Nobody knows who Mark was : John, whose surname was Mark. There is no historical identity about Mark ; nothing to connect him, in any way, with the history—if you call it a “history”—which, you say, he wrote, about Christ. There is no circumstantial evidence for Mark’s authorship of the Gospel which bears his name. Let us see. What does Paul call Mark ?

I need not take up your time by discussing any question about Paul’s testimony on these points of Christian evidence. There is not a sceptical school in Germany or France that does not acknowledge Paul’s existence and activity as a Christian preacher and missionary. Their language translated into our mother-English is, “That’s the fellow that has done all the mischief! If it had not been for Paul, we should very likely never have heard of this Jesus Christ. The early fanaticism might have died out had it not been for him, and for his incessant activity in preaching and writing

those letters to the churches," and so on. So we need not spend time, just now, in discussing Paul's credibility or authority as a witness.

Again, I say, What does Paul call Mark? "Sister's son to Barnabas." Barnabas, or "the son of consolation," that Levite convert to Christianity from the island of Cyprus, who had land, and sold it, and laid the money at the feet of the apostles, when, just after the day of Pentecost, they had "all things common." This is Mark's uncle, and as the uncle is much attached to Paul, the nephew becomes the companion of both; and, long after, Mark is often mentioned as a companion and assistant of Paul, even when the uncle is not with them.

But Peter also knows Mark, and mentions Mark in his first epistle: "The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so also doth Marcus my son." Babylon, which Eusebius tells us meant Rome. That spiritual Babylon depicted with such intensely vivid power in the Book of Revelation. That Rome is the "Babylon" from which Peter writes, I feel fully persuaded, notwithstanding the contrary opinion of some scholars; and that the early Christians used the Apocalypse and its phraseology, and expected the fulfilment of some of its prophecies in their own days, as is evident from Justin Martyr, who, although he never mentions the name of an evan-

gelist, tells us that "John, one of the apostles of Christ," wrote the Revelation.

When Peter calls Mark his son, he is understood to mean that Mark was his spiritual son, because Mark was converted under his preaching, say the Fathers. And so Peter becomes a friend and intimate of this Levite family of Christians. You may see that he was so esteemed ; for, on the night that Peter is released from prison by the angel, he goes and finds the Christians at midnight, holding a prayer-meeting—shall I say?—at the house of "Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark ;" that is to say, also at the house of Barnabas's sister. So, then, although the second evangelist was not, like the first, one of the twelve apostles, yet he is in the midst of their assemblies, and the assemblies of their friends, and must, therefore, have become fully acquainted with all the circumstances and facts of the Gospel history which were rehearsed by the apostles. But, suppose he had never seen a miracle by the Saviour, or heard a parable from Him : suppose Mark had never seen Christ—though no one has a right to say aught of the kind—yet, I repeat he was in a situation to become fully acquainted with the facts of the Gospel history ; and therefore a very likely person to write a Gospel.

But the testimony of the Apostolic Fathers—Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian,

Origen, Eusebius, and others, the earliest and most important Christian writers who succeeded the apostles and their companions—I say the early testimony of the Christian Church respecting the authorship of Mark's Gospel, although brief, is of such peculiar importance that I beg your closest attention while I rehearse it to you. Mark, they affirm, wrote his Gospel at Rome,—wrote down the substance of Peter's preaching, at the request of the Christian Church in that city, where he had acted as Peter's interpreter; and that the apostle knew of it, and approved it. How short this information is, and yet how important it is! and how it recalls to our recollection what we have just been talking of,—Peter writing from the spiritual Babylon, that "eternal" Rome, and telling us that his "son" Mark is with him!

Brief as this information is, it completely overthrows Strauss's affirmation—"Nobody knows who, nobody knows where, and nobody knows when." Mark's Gospel, it is clear, from the conjoint statement of so many of the Fathers, was, like Matthew's, written before the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70, by the Roman army under Titus; a fact which may also be clearly gathered from Mark's Gospel as well as from Matthew's. But what is the peculiar statement of this testimony of the Fathers? That Mark, who interpreted while Peter preached, wrote down the substance of Peter's preaching. So that the second Gospel might be called the Gospel

of Peter, with almost greater propriety than it is called the Gospel of Mark.

"Peter's preaching?" says some one, who is disposed to be critical while he listens to me; "Peter's preaching? You don't think it likely, do you, that Peter's preaching at Rome resembled Mark's Gospel?"

Pray, my good friend, I would reply, how do you think Peter *did* preach at Rome? Try to imagine it with something like verisimilitude. You know the apostles could not take as a text a verse from the New Testament when it was not written; they could not take a text, and divide it "first," "secondly," and "thirdly," according to the stiff old Aristotelian mode, still followed by so many modern preachers; or go on to "nineteenthly," "twentiethly," and "lastly," like some of the good old Puritans.

Their first duty, you know, when they entered a new town or city, was to remember their Divine Master's injunction, and "go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!" If there were a Jewish synagogue in the place, they had to carry their message thither first. And now, again, if there were time to dwell upon it, how we might expatiate on that remarkable Providence which had led the Jews, for some hundreds of years before, to the cultivation of their mercantile habits! Alexander, 333 years before Christ, gave them privileges when he founded the capital of Egypt, and called it by his name. And when Paul, and Peter, and the rest went forth

- as Christian missionaries, there was scarcely a port of importance on the shores of the Mediterranean, or a city of rank in Greece, in Asia Minor, and the Levant, but, most likely, a Jewish synagogue was to be found there. So wondrously God had provided that a little soil should be found wherever they went wherein the apostolic sowers could drop the first seeds of Christian truth !

“Why did not the Jews believe in Christ?” two or three notable London sceptics used to cry out, when I endeavoured to lay these evidences before them in the year 1857. “Why do you tell lies in the shape of asking questions?” I replied ; “for some of you are very ingenious in that art. You *know*, even while you ask that question, that hundreds and thousands of the Jews believed in Christ. All the first Christians were Jews. And it was not until Jews refused to listen to their message that the apostles turned to offer Christ to the Gentiles.”

Well, when, in his character as a Christian missionary, any of the apostles, coming to a new place, entered a Jewish synagogue to address his own countrymen, he might read, or call on another to read, a passage in Hebrew from the Torah, or the Prophets, or the Psalms ; and then go on to show that it was a declaration relating to Jesus as the promised Messiah. But when Peter preached to a mixed assembly of Jews and Pagans at Rome, he could not act so absurdly as to cause a Hebrew

writer to be read to them. How would he have to preach? He would have to tell his audience who Jesus was, what He came to do, and what He did. How He proclaimed Himself to be the Saviour of men, how He compassionated the sick and suffering, and healed them, how He fed the hungry multitude miraculously, how boldly He reprehended the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, how openly He invited the multitude to turn from sin to holiness, how lovingly He conducted Himself towards His disciples; but how, at length, one of them betrayed Him, and He was seized, and treated with vile indignity, and at last crucified. Just so; and all this is Mark's Gospel.

But again, can we bring this home completely to our minds as an exact truth—that Mark's Gospel is the substance of Peter's preaching? I invite you to a critical inquiry, and want to rivet your attention to it. For, to my mind, a critical inquiry demands a more determined voluntary attention of the mind than even an argumentative and logical inquiry; since, to some, it looks trivial, and others find that it tends to dissipate the power of reasoning, by the scattered character of the items it presents for considerate thought. What kind of a Gospel is Mark's Gospel? You know the Gospels differ from each other in form and manner of narration, and sometimes in the omission of some facts, or the insertion of other facts. Whatever may be pronounced,



at some future period of the Church's history, to be the *true* theory of inspiration (for, although eighteen centuries have passed away, the Christian Church, as yet, has *not* pronounced what is the *true* theory), it will be a theory which admits the fact that *verbal* inspiration does not characterize every part of the Scriptures ; since the Evangelists certainly differ verbally : they by no means always employ the same words, either when describing what Christ did, or what He said.

How does Mark differ, now, from the other Evangelists? What is there that is peculiar to him, which an attentive reader cannot fail to remark? It is this, that he often mentions some little fact which is not mentioned by Matthew or Luke when they are relating the parallel part of the Gospel history ; and he also relates it in a striking or graphic way. He has a strong tendency to notice facts. And often his *little* fact, as we at first deemed it to be, is found to be of more importance than it seemed to be. He did not introduce it, we discover, through a trifling and merely garrulous tendency ; but because he estimates the full importance of facts. Now is this any mark of Peter's mind?

What sort of a mind had Peter as it regards the tendency to notice facts? What kind of a mind was Peter's? A quick, impulsive, impetuous mind. Well, that is the kind of man who does notice facts keenly. But we will not beg the question in that

way. What kind of a mind was Peter's as it regards the tendency to notice facts? for you know all men are not alike in that respect. Some men have very little tendency indeed to notice facts.

Suppose two friends of some member of my audience were to pay him a visit, coming from a distance, and had never before been in this town. You take them out to walk through the streets, and look about them. One of them, very likely, will not have got to the end of a single street before he yawns, and intimates that he would like to go into some place of refreshment, and pass the time; for he sees nothing worth looking at. But how very different is the behaviour of the other! He is all curiosity about the age of the buildings, the form of house architecture, and a hundred other items of observation. He notices everything, and is never weary of inquiry and remark.

Or, take two men, and send them into a crowded room, and ask them, when they come out of it, what they have seen. How different may their answers be! "Seen!" replies one, "how *seen*? what d'ye mean? what was there to see?" "Well, but," say you, "can't you just tell us what you've seen?" "Bless me!" replies the man, impatiently, "what was there to see?—a crowd of folks and a lot of chairs and tables. What a ridiculous question you put to me!"

Now, if Charles Dickens had been the other

man, he would never have given you that answer. Chairs and tables? He would have made them live! If there was a row of chairs and an old-fashioned arm-chair standing in front of them, he would have likened it to some peculiarly observant old fellow sitting squat and making notes upon the company; he would have given the chairs grotesque human features. He would have told you all about the crockery in the room, and all about the colours and pictures upon it. If any man's nose in the room were twisted a little to the right or left, or a man squinted, or there was something odd in a lady's dress, he would have been able to tell you all about it, and in a very piquant style too. If he had been but five minutes in such a room, he could have made five pages of living and attractive description out of what he had seen and noticed in it—five? ay, five-and-twenty.

I repeat, that we are very different people, compared one with another, as it regards the tendency to notice facts. Now, was Peter constitutionally a keen, an exact,—shall I say, even with all his impulsiveness, — an imperturbable observer and noticer of facts? Let us turn to one of the other Gospels, and see if we can discover that such was the case. To what shall we turn? Let it be to something of real importance in the Gospel history. Well, then, let us turn to the morning of the resurrection; the events of that morning would test a

man's powers of observation, if he had any. What do we read of Peter's conduct during that morning? Turn to Luke, and see what he says about it; and then turn to John, and observe how pointedly he corroborates Luke. But take especial notice of what John says; for he is with Peter that morning. What does John say? That, when Mary Magdalene returned from the sepulchre to tell Peter and John (most likely knowing that they lodged together as friends—all the disciples would not lodge in one house) that the stone was removed, and the Lord's body was gone from the tomb, the two disciples ran to the sepulchre. But that "the other disciple," meaning John himself, the other disciple whom Jesus loved, "did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he, stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying, yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, *and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.*" And the Greek words more exactly mean "*neatly folded up* in a place by itself."

What a singular power and tendency of mind—nay, what a remarkable combination of seemingly opposite qualities in a mind—does this little gem of a narrative discover to us! That Peter—the ever impulsive Peter, who does not stoop down to look in, but *goes in* to the sepulchre without hesi-

tation—that Peter, with his mind all hurry and perturbation with the news of the disappearance of his Master's body, should be able to notice, so minutely and exactly, that fact about the napkin. We can scarcely conceive of a more striking proof of a man's possessing a strong, constitutional, and unconquerable tendency to notice facts, and notice them strictly, even under circumstances most forcibly calculated to distract and dissipate such a man's power and tendency.

Now let us return to the Gospel of Mark, and see if we can discover in it the very characteristics of mind, the identical power and tendency of mind, that we have just been describing. And let us take in our hand the key which the Fathers give us to unlock the secret of the authorship of the Second Gospel. They combine to assure us that it contains the substance of Peter's preaching, written down by Mark, his interpreter. If that becomes to us clear, as a fact, we shall, I undertake to say, feel convinced we also discover personal traces of Peter's feelings in the preaching which Mark has written down. And that will be in accordance with our experience of human nature. It will be just what we should expect to discover.

What shall we turn to, in Mark's Gospel, as likely to assist us in our search? Let it be something of stirring importance in the general Gospel narrative. Suppose we turn to the storm on the

Lake of Gennesaret. What do Matthew and Luke say of Christ in that scene of peril? Simply, "He was asleep," and "He fell asleep." But what do we read in Mark? "He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."

How comes this minuteness and particularity into the narrative? one cannot help asking. What has the *pillow in the hinder part of the ship* to do with the storm, and the peril of the disciples, and the miracle that follows? How could any one think of aught so unimportant, we ask, in the midst of such a scene? How could Peter get time to think about it—for, remember, it is written down from his preaching—while he cried out, no doubt with the other terrified disciples, "Lord, save us! we perish"? How could Peter call to mind aught so apparently unimportant, while listening to the awful Being who arose, and said, "Peace, be still!" and there was a great calm? How their blood must have become chill with awe, and how "the hair of their flesh must have stood up"—as the expression is in Homer and the Book of Job—while they said, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

We must seek the answer to our inquiry in our knowledge of common human nature. To see how all the commentators are puzzled with this "pillow in the hinder part of the ship" is most amusing. It quite confounds all their learned heads. The

Greek word *προσκεφάλαιον* is, literally, a pillow. But the commentators have taken every imaginable sort of round-about way to explain it. Yet I feel, let all the commentators in the world say what they will, I must come to nature here. I feel instinctively that the cause of this particularity is personal. The boat must have been Peter's own. He is spoken of as the boat-owner, during the miraculous draught of fishes. Ah! Peter would be fond of having his Master in his own boat. And whenever poor Peter, who had denied his Master, and felt ever-during self-condemnation for it, rehearsed the account of the storm in his preaching, he would never forget where his dear Lord slept "on the pillow in the hinder part of the ship;" for it would be a consolation to his sorrowing mind to remember that he had always provided a pillow for his dear Master's head, in his own boat, and most likely, had not one himself; for it is "*the* pillow" in the Greek, not "a pillow," showing pretty clearly that there was but one pillow in the boat.

Let us turn to another striking proof that the Second Gospel is the substance of Peter's preaching. What does the angel say to the women at the sepulchre, on the morning of our Lord's resurrection, according to Matthew? "Go and tell His disciples that He goeth before them into Galilee." "Go and tell His disciples;" that is, *all* His disciples. Matthew relates what the angel said in a general way.

But whenever Peter related what was told him by the women to whom the angel spoke, if he himself were personally named by the angel, he would not fail to remember it. So thus Mark gives Peter's recollection: "Go your way, tell His disciples, *and Peter*, that He goeth before you into Galilee." As if the angel meant, "Peter denied his Master; but his Master has forgiven the heart-broken penitent already. Don't forget poor Peter! Go your way, tell His disciples, *and Peter*, that He goeth before you into Galilee." One sees at once that the information comes from poor grateful Peter.

We have just now mentioned Peter's denial of his beloved Master. Let us stay for a moment or two, and contrast Mark's narrative of the circumstances with the narratives of the other Evangelists, and see if we cannot again bring it home as a conclusive fact and a circumstantial reality to our minds, that Mark's Gospel is the substance of Peter's preaching. This time, be it remembered, we have the four Evangelists for comparison. How does the general narrative begin? With the account of the institution of the Last Supper—that meal of hallowed sweetness which they could never forget to the end of their lives. The soul of Christ must have been already "sorrowful even unto death;" yet He speaks with such wondrous love and tenderness that they feel as if they had never had so much of heaven upon



earth since they were born as they experience in that hour. And He suddenly breaks the rapt and holy calm they are all sharing, but one, with the startling declaration, "One of you that eateth with me shall betray me"! And then follow the inquiring alarm, "Is it I?—Is it I?" and Christ's further declaration, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night;" and Peter's self-confident assertion, "Although all should be offended, yet will not I;" and the pointed prophecy of the Saviour, "Verily I say unto thee, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice!"

Such are the words in Matthew; and they are of the same import in Luke and John. But what are the words in Mark? He gives us the words of Peter himself, in his customary preaching; and every word was so deeply stamped in Peter's memory that he cannot forget *any word* that the Saviour uttered! and he *must* give the very words themselves: he cannot state them generally—"Before the cock crow *twice* thou shalt deny me thrice." And then, says Mark, "But he spake the *more vehemently*—if I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee." Peter, in his preaching, cannot cease to take home to himself his guilt. He can never forgive himself, even when his Master has forgiven him. The narrative in the other three Gospels informs us that the cock crew, in general terms, and repeats the words "Verily I say unto thee,

before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice," as recurring to Peter's guilty memory; but in Mark the characteristic particularity of the narrative is kept up. The cock crows once—and then a second time—and then Peter remembers his Lord had said, "Before the cock crow *twice* thou shalt deny me thrice."

Do not let us dismiss this item of our critical enquiry in such haste as to forget that the other three Evangelists *meant* what Mark has expressed. There were two cock-crowings which were noted by the ancients as the announcements of the morning; and the second was more especially called "the cock-crowing"—though the two crowings were often mentioned distinctly.

And what does Mark say of Peter's conduct, just after the denial of his Master? "When he thought thereon, he wept." "When he *thought*?" Who could tell what were Peter's *thoughts*, except himself? That little item of information could only come from Peter himself. But what do Matthew and Luke say? That Peter "went out and wept bitterly." Ah, poor Peter would not say "I wept bitterly"—though Matthew and Luke's informant knew that he did: Peter never thought he had wept bitterly enough.

There is another kind of proof which I wish you could feel to be as forcible as I feel it to be. Why do not you young men learn to read your Greek

Testament? It is as easy as learning A, B, C. You can make no estimate of the enjoyment it would give you to be able to read the Gospels in Greek, and compare them one with another. A little skill in Greek would enable you to discover that Mark's Greek is the rudest—to speak plainly—in the New Testament. Peter's skilful and diligent interpreter has fully succeeded in his endeavour to embody in the Greek, the style and manner of an impulsive and energetic *extemporary* preacher. Men who read, or speak what they have written, to their audiences, you know, usually display a change and variety of words and expressions. Not so with off-hand, impetuous speakers. They use the same words often ; and so did Peter, as Mark shews us.

I may instance the frequent use of one word—*εὐθέως*—"immediately," or "straightway," or "forthwith," as our good translators have variously given it. The word occurs 37 or 38 times in St. Mark's Gospel ; 11 times in his very first chapter. In St. Matthew it occurs but 15 times ; in St. Luke only 5 times ; while St. John has it only *thrice*. 38 times this one word occurs in St. Mark, and only 23 times in all the other three Gospels put together. "And straightway Jesus did so and so—and immediately he did so and so—and forthwith he did so and so." The phrase and manner of an energetic speaker. Mark had interpreted for Peter during his preaching,

so often, that he produces the exact mannerism of Peter's delivery, in writing down, from memory, the substance of Peter's preaching.

But it is the graphic power, which Strauss half-sneeringly terms the "dramatic tendency" of St. Mark, and his ever-present habit of being particular even to minuteness in his relation of facts, which is his distinguishing characteristic—just as we learn from the narrative of the Resurrection, that this was the constitutional tendency, or instinct one might say, of the mind of Peter. This minute particularity and exactness sometimes make one smile : for instance, when Christ tells his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Matthew and Luke tell us how the poor disciples, with their customary dulness, "began to reason among themselves—It is because we have taken no bread." But what adds Mark ? "Neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf." Peter had been looking into the "locker," as our sailors would say. It was most likely, again, his own boat ; and he had felt uneasy about the meal, which was drawing nigh. Just like Peter: *circumstantial* Peter !

I must not dwell longer on the Second Evangelist. But let me just notice very hastily how there is no mention of our Lord's genealogy, or his miraculous birth, in Mark ; and Peter would feel that neither of these relations—nor the denunciations of Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum, and the comparison

of them to Tyre, Sidon and Sodom—would be likely to impress the minds of the pagan Romans, while he preached to them. Christ's temptation is also described in a single verse ; and Peter was not likely to dwell on that fact before such an audience.

Mark also, very naturally, as Peter's interpreter, gives the very words that the preacher spoke in his native Syriac: "Talitha cumi," "Ephphatha," "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani:" these being the very words uttered by the Saviour. But what most clearly demonstrates the fact that the Second Gospel is a record of what was spoken to Gentiles, and not to Jews is, that it explains Jewish phrases and customs. Surely, it would have been like carrying coals to Newcastle, to say, at Jerusalem—"Corban, that is to say, a gift ; *the preparation*, that is, the day before the Sabbath ; *defiled*, that is to say, with unwashen hands." "For, the Pharisees and all the Jews except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables (or beds)."

Let me entreat you to observe, before we leave the Second Evangelist, how Mark's reproduction of his spiritual father's preaching, demonstrates to us the heartfelt modesty of Peter's true character ; for it omits what Matthew tells of Peter—how he

walked on the water to meet his Lord, how Christ blessed him, and gave him the keys, and how Christ sent him to get the temple-money from the mouth of the fish ;—what Luke tells us—that Christ prayed specially for Peter ;—and what John tells us—how Peter cast himself into the sea to meet Jesus after the Resurrection—how Christ gave Peter charge to feed his lambs and his sheep, and how Christ predicted Peter's martyrdom.

In conclusion, I think I may say without fear of contradiction, Strauss cannot truly say that nobody knows who wrote the Second Gospel: nobody knows who Mark was: nobody knows when his Gospel was written, or where it was written.

3. Let us now approach the THIRD EVANGELIST. I shall not make so large a demand upon your time, in the cases of St. Luke and St. John, as in that of St. Mark. What reply are we able to make to the assertions of Strauss, that nobody knows who Luke was, or when or where the Third Gospel was written? Is Luke a mere man in the moon, a shadow without any historical identity? Is the author of the Third Gospel a mere ignoramus, who knows nothing about the history of Christ, and therefore can tell us nothing? If that be the opinion of Strauss, we immediately reply, it was not the opinion of Luke himself.

In the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we have the author speaking in the first person

plural, as we say: "*we* endeavoured to go into Macedonia"—"we came with a straight course to Samothracia"—"we were in that city—that is to say, Philippi—certain days," and so on. The author is with Paul; is one who obeys the divine signal given to Paul of the man of Macedonia, in a vision saying "Come over and help us;" and so, doubtless, hears Paul preach the first Christian sermon ever preached in Europe. Further on in the Acts of the Apostles, he tells us he was with Paul in the voyage he made amongst the Greek islands, and to Tyre, and Ptolemais and Cesarea; and how he went with him to Jerusalem. "The day following," the author of the Acts himself also tells us, he went in with Paul to "James, and all the elders were present." He is thus a personal eye-witness of the real existence of the Apostles of Christ; and, undoubtedly, would hear them speak in that meeting at Jerusalem and give their advice to Paul.

As we draw nearer the end of the Acts of the Apostles, the author of it informs us that he sailed with Paul in that long and dangerous voyage in the Mediterranean by Cyprus and Crete, and across the Adriatic to Malta, and from thence to Syracuse, and thence to Rome, and there he concludes by describing to us how Paul, as a prisoner, "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house," and preached Christ to all who would come and hear him.

Whoever the author of this Acts of the Apostles

may be, he is, like the Apostle to whom he is attached, a man of earnestness and of action, and is a very likely man to write, not only this stirring narrative of the life of Paul, preceded by a brief account of the doings of Christ's earlier disciples, but to write some account of the life of Christ himself. And he points us to the fact that he did write such an account in the very first words of the Acts of the Apostles, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up," and so on. We turn to the "former treatise." How does it begin?

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed."

So then, the author of the Third Gospel begins it with the bold challenge that he had "perfect understanding of all things from the very first." Strauss must have been very bold, must he not? if he really asserted that Luke knew nothing of the history of Christ, had no certain information, or



could give us none, about Christ's words and deeds. For that Λουκας, or Luke, is the name of the author of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the Third Gospel, we have the direct testimony of Irenæus and Tertullian, in the close of the second century, and their evidence is corroborated by the testimonies of Origen, Eusebius, and numerous Fathers that follow. Justin Martyr, also, let it be observed, repeatedly quotes St. Luke's Gospel as well as St. Matthew's, and he wrote in the first half of the second century. Justin does not mention the name either of Luke or of Matthew, but it is certain that he quotes both Gospels very frequently. He does not mention either of their names, because their names would be not only unknown to the persons he addresses, but would be no evidence to them of the truth of what he was writing to prove.

One stray thought before I pass on. Marcion, in the second century, attempted the mischievous prank of mutilating the Gospel of Luke, and pretended that the Christian Church did not read the *genuine* Gospel. Tertullian's book against the mutilator has come down to us, and it contains this strong sentence after he has enumerated several Churches which were founded by the apostles: "I affirm, then, that in those churches, and not in those only which were founded by the apostles, but in all which have fellowship with them, that the

Gospel of Luke which we so steadfastly defend has been received from its first publication." You see, my friends, the belief of the early Church in the genuineness and authenticity of the gospels was not allowed to lie in their minds as an idle, slumbering persuasion. They were put upon their mettle to defend their precious possession of these Gospels even in the second century of our era. And, 'pon honour, I think they were all the better Christians for it.

Irenæus tells his readers that he who rejects Luke will be convicted of throwing away the Gospel of which he professes himself a disciple. "For there are many, and those very necessary parts of the gospel which we know by Luke's means," says Irenæus. And then he goes on to mention the facts and parable recorded by Luke which are *not* recorded by the other Evangelists—such as the information respecting the Holy Family and the Family of John the Baptist in Luke's opening chapters; the testimony of Simeon and Anna; Christ's questioning of the doctors when he was but twelve years of age; the age of our Lord when He was baptized; the miraculous draught of fishes; the cure of the woman who had been bowed down with an infirmity of eighteen years; the cure of the man with the dropsy on the Sabbath day; the parable of the man who knocked at the door in the night time for bread; the deed of the woman that was

a sinner in kissing his feet and anointing Him in the house of the Pharisee ; the parables of the rich man who hoarded up his increase, and of the creditor who had two debtors ; the parable of the rich man and Lazarus ; the conversion of Zaccheus the publican ; the parable of the publican and Pharisee praying in the temple ; the healing of the ten lepers ; the parables of the judge who yielded to the importunate widow ; and of the barren fig-tree. And is all this attested by one who wrote in the latter half of the second century ? Can there be a stronger proof that the Gospel of Luke, which Irenæus had in his hands seventeen hundred years ago, and only 150 years after Christ died and rose again, was the same Gospel of Luke that we have in our hands now ?

The attachment of St. Luke to St. Paul seems to have been very strong and true. In the great apostle's last letter which has reached us—the second epistle to Timothy—which is believed to have been written from his last Roman prison, but a few months before his martyrdom, in the year 68—St. Paul urges Timothy to come to him and bring Mark with him ; for Demas, he sorrowfully says, has forsaken him through love of the present world, and Crescens and Titus are gone. "Only Luke," he adds, touchingly,—“only Luke is with me.” Luke is also mentioned by St. Paul as one of his ‘fellow-labourers’ in his letter to Philemon ; but,

you will remember that, in St. Paul's letter to the Colossian Church, Luke is mentioned with others as among the friends who visit him in his first Roman prison, and he is called "Luke, the beloved physician." He is *not* called a painter. That Popish story is only an invention of the fourteenth century. It has no foundation whatever in the testimony of the ancients. Eusebius and Jerome, in the fourth century, assert that Luke was a physician of Antioch: the city, you know, where the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians."

"A physician?" some one will say, "a physician? Then Luke ought to be a better scholar than mere fishermen." Just so. And St. Luke's Greek is the best Greek of the Gospels. You know it could not be expected that Jews should speak or write what is called classic Greek. If they wrote or spoke in Greek words, the mode and term of expression would indicate a Jewish not a Greek cast of thought. Thus the New Testament is always said to consist of Hebraistic or Hellenistic Greek. Luke's Greek, however, is purer than the Greek of the other Gospels; nay, the four verses which I quoted to you from our authorised version, the four verses with which Luke's Gospel begins are, in the original, the purest and most classic Greek in the entire New Testament. Let me not forget to say that these four verses are followed by a passage of considerable length which you must

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not include in the character I have just given of Luke's Greek. From the 5th verse of the first chapter to the end of the second chapter, Luke's style is so Hebraistic, that it has been shrewdly conjectured by some scholars that we have here a document entrusted to him by the Holy Family, and he translates it for us, preserving the peculiar cast of thought, as much as possible, in his Greek translation from the Hebrew.

St. Paul does not include Luke among those "who are of the circumcision," when he calls him "the beloved physician." Luke is therefore a Gentile, "born at Antioch," says Eusebius ; and he does not give the genealogy of Christ in the way that Matthew gives it, that is to say, by shewing that Jesus was descended from David and Abraham and thus was the Messiah the Jews had been taught to look for. Instead of this, he imitates the Gentile method of tracing genealogies, and beginning with Christ himself, traces his line up to Adam. I cannot take up your time here by shewing how the differences in the two genealogies are to be explained ; but I can refer you to a book which I have read over four times with the increasing satisfaction that it solves the whole difficulty. Let me recommend all who have any unsettledness on this question to read the work of a venerable clergyman still living, the Lord Arthur Hervey, now Bishop of Bath and Wells.

Talking of difficulties in the Gospels, let me also note that the objection so often urged against the Third Gospel, respecting Cyrenius, or Quirinus, being Governor of Syria, when the taxing or enrolment was first made, which caused Joseph and Mary to go up from Nazareth, in Galilee, to Bethlehem, to be taxed or enrolled, has also been swept away by a great living scholar. It was always alleged that since the government of Syria by Quirinus did not commence till 10, or as some said 12 years after the birth of Christ,—the author of the Third Gospel was not, and could not be Luke, the companion of Paul; but some compiler in the second or third century who was not 'well up' in his chronology. Even the critical Strauss sings that old song. Now, however, Dr. Zumpt of Berlin, whose reputation as a scholar stands among the foremost of our time, has shown, to the satisfaction of all who are best qualified to judge, that Publius Sulpicius Quirinus was governor of Syria from the year 4 before Christ, to the year 1 after Christ; and again from A.D. 6 to A.D. 11.

But Luke was a physician, we have seen from the testimony of St. Paul himself, and the tradition reported by Eusebius and Jerome. And none of you can read Luke's Gospel thoughtfully, and regard the testimony and report as untrue. St. Luke records more miracles of healing than any of the other evangelists; he takes more time to

describe them, and evidently feels more interest in describing them than any of the other evangelists. Nay, but we can come nearer to the proof that it was a physician who wrote the Third Gospel; only here again, I am straitened in attempting to give you the proof, because you young men who might so easily do it, will not learn to read your Greek Testament. St. Luke uses words which are *not* in the other Evangelists; neither are they words common to Xenophon and Thucydides, and other so-called classic writers. They are medical words, such as *παροξυσμος*, *ὕδρωπικος* and *ιασις*, which are in use by Greek medical writers only.

You will remember, how, in the Acts of the Apostles, when Elymas the sorcerer opposed God's work, he was told by Paul he should be blind for a season; "and immediately," the narrative goes on, "there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand"—the very picture presented so livingly in one of Raffaele's cartoons. The word translated mist—*ἀχλύς*—is explained by Galen, a Greek medical writer who comes after Luke's time: and he says that those who are afflicted with the disorder of the eye so called "seem to see through a sort of mist or fog." The peculiar word rendered 'surfeiting' in the 21st chapter of St. Luke—*κραিপάλη*—is used by Hippocrates, another well-known Greek medical writer.

Again : Matthew, Mark, and John do not describe the persons stricken with the palsy in the manner that Greek medical writers describe them. The three Evangelists always use the word paralytic—*παρλυτικός*. St. Luke uses the mode of expression common to Greek medical men—*παραλελυμένος*—the perfect participle of the passive voice, meaning ‘paralysed.’ Another remarkable token that it is the hand of a physician who is employing the pen in the Third Gospel, is the use of the term *συνεχομένη*—‘seized with’ or ‘taken with,’ in the way that the Greek medical writers use it. Thus we read in St. Luke, that Simon’s wife’s mother was ‘taken with’ a great fever ; and the Greek word I have just mentioned is employed again in the Acts of the Apostles, to describe the sickness of the father of Publius ‘the chief man of the island’ of Melita or Malta.

But St. Luke was a gentleman as well as a physician. He will not let his profession down. When the earnest, unpolished Peter preached, we learn from Mark’s Gospel, that he described the woman who had an issue of blood twelve years as one who “had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” St. Luke does not deny that she “could not be healed of any” ; but he does not say she grew worse : he will not let his profession down. Nor does he give



the rough hint that Peter seems to give that it is a *suffering* experiment to put yourself into the hands of physicians. Dr. Frend also shows us that the educated physician, St. Luke, employs a more temperate word, in the delicate Greek, to show how the lady expended her wealth on physicians, than the rough, boisterous word used by Peter, which indicates luxurious and riotous waste, and is the word used by St. Luke to express the wasteful spending of the Prodigal Son.

In conclusion, let me say that several of the Fathers say that Luke wrote his Gospel in Greece. Luke's Gospel being called by himself "the former treatise," must have been written before his "Acts of the Apostles." And as the "Acts" does not relate Paul's martyrdom, but leaves Paul in his first imprisonment at Rome, under Nero, we must conclude, with the judicious Lardner, that Luke left Paul, for a time, at Rome, and went into Greece to compose, or finish the composition of, his Gospel, and the "Acts," not later than A.D. 64 or 65.

I think I am now entitled to affirm that neither Strauss, nor any other rejector of Christianity, can be proclaiming truth, when he says nobody knows who Luke was; nobody knows who wrote the Gospel now called by his name; nobody knows when it was written; nobody knows where it was written.

4. We come at last to the FOURTH GOSPEL. On the unguineness of this most glorious record of our Saviour, the critical Strauss is very strong and positive. We must understand him as declaring, very determinedly, that nobody knows who the author of the Fourth Gospel was; nobody knows who wrote it; nobody knows when it was written, or where it was written.

“Not know who John was?” every grateful Christian will exclaim. “What! that disciple that Jesus loved, not know who he was? He who leaned on Jesus’ breast at supper: he who could ask his Lord a question when others hardly felt courage to ask it; he who was with his Lord everywhere—in the Mount of Transfiguration—in the garden of Gethsemane—in the hall of judgment—by the very cross itself, and received there the express charge from his crucified Lord to take care of Jesus’ mother? Why, if St. John had not written a Gospel, we should scarcely have thought the Gospels complete.”

But is there unmistakeable evidence that it was *our* John—John, the beloved disciple—who was the author of the Fourth Gospel? Be it understood that so generally and universally has the Christian church, all along, regarded the evidence for this fact as unmistakeable, that no discussions were raised upon it until of late years. The industrious Lardner quotes the testimonies to John’s

authorship of the Fourth Gospel from Irenæus, and Athenagoras, and Theophilus of Antioch, and Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, in the second century ; and from Origen, and Eusebius, and Epiphanius, and Augustine, and Chrysostom in the third and fourth centuries ; and from many later writers.

“John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned upon His breast, published a Gospel, while he dwelt at Ephesus, in Asia,” says Irenæus. “These things the Holy Scriptures teach us, and all who were moved by the Spirit ; among whom John says, ‘In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God,’ ” so says Theophilus of Antioch. “In the last place,” says Clement of Alexandria, “John, observing that the things obvious to the senses had been clearly set forth in those Gospels (Matthew, Luke, and Mark, as he arranges them), being urged by his friends, and divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.”

What these three Fathers thus write in the second century, be it remembered, was the belief of thousands and tens of thousands of Christian believers in their own age. We may feel as sure, from these clear expressions in their writings, that the Christians living in the century immediately after Christ’s death believed the Fourth Gospel was written by *our* John—the John who leaned on Jesus’ breast at supper, as we can feel sure of the

clearest and strongest, and most unimpeachable facts of all past history.

These three writers lived in the latter half of the second century; but there are undoubted quotations from John's Gospel in Justin Martyr, who lived in the first half of that century. Justin does not mention the name of John as a gospel writer any more than the name of Matthew or Luke; but Justin speaks of "the Logos having been made flesh," and says this was Christ—a doctrine he could only derive from John's Gospel. Justin also quotes the words of John the Baptist, as given in the first chapter of St. John: "I am not the Christ; but I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." He was evidently acquainted with the words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," from the observations he makes about the early Christians not keeping the Jewish sabbath; and it is equally evident that he had read the third chapter of John's gospel, when he quotes Christ's words, "Unless ye be born again, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; and adds, "it is evidently impossible for those once born to enter into their mother's womb"—an affirmative embodiment of the question of Nicodemus.

The early Christian writers unite in assuring us that, after the death of Jesus' mother, the beloved disciple went to live in Asia Minor; and that he had the care of seven churches, Ephesus being his

centre. His banishment to the Isle of Patmos is commonly stated to have occurred in the reign of Domitian, which would be late in the first century; but there are some scholars who place it earlier, and believe the Revelation was written as early as any of the Four Gospels. The Fathers assure us that John wrote his Gospel and Epistles at Ephesus, and died there in the hundredth year of his age, about the year 100, and in the third year of the emperor Trajan. Many affecting traits of the behaviour and piety of the Beloved Disciple in his old age are recorded by the Fathers.

The Gospel of John, you know, is often called the Supplementary Gospel; but that is too feeble a name for it. No doubt, John purposed to supply some parts of the Gospel history that had not been related by the Synoptics, as Matthew, Mark, and Luke are now so frequently called. But he had other great and independent purposes in writing his Gospel. I say, in "writing" his Gospel; for it does not follow that he could not write because he was the son of a fisherman. His father, Zebedee, had "servants" attending to his boats; and John seems to have been free from any absolute necessity to labour. Peter had his wife and his wife's mother to sustain; and neither he nor Andrew—nor, perhaps, any other of the chosen Twelve, save John—were constantly with their Master.

I beg to recommend a little book to you. It is entitled "The Facts of the Four Gospels." Mr. Frederic Seebohm is the author ; and although I do not know him I feel very thankful to him for writing that most excellent little book. The fact that John *only* accompanied Jesus in his early visits to Jerusalem, and that the twelve did not go with Jesus to that city until He went thither to die, is made very clear by Mr. Seebohm ; and he also furnishes an abundance of most pellucidly clear illustrations on other points of the Gospel history.

The narratives of the three Evangelists, the synoptics are confined very much to Christ's life in Galilee. For Peter in his preaching would confine himself to what he personally knew, and so would Matthew. And Luke's informants seem to have been apostles and Galilean disciples. The fourth Evangelist had therefore as a necessary part of his task to complete the history by informing us of the earlier visits of Jesus to Jerusalem.

But he had other great purposes. First, he corrects the gnostic errors of his age. The leader against whose *false* doctrines respecting the logos and the pleroma, or "fulness," St. John directs the opening of his Gospel, is said to have been Cerinthus. As he lived in the close of the first century, John's Gospel could not have been published earlier than about the year 98, the time which is usually assigned to it.

Above all other aims John had to produce what Clement of Alexandria so aptly terms "a spiritual Gospel." He therefore shows us how the Saviour proclaimed His own Divinity, and the fitness and fulness of His salvation for men.

John must have had the synoptical Gospels before him, but he seldom touches their narratives. Yet when he does approach them, he usually adds something they had all omitted. It is so in the narrative of the miracle of the five barley loaves and two fishes with which Christ fed the five thousand : it is so in the narrative of Mary's anointing Christ's feet with the spikenard ; it is so above all when the Evangelists come to the solemn closing scenes of the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Serious questioning you know has often arisen and still exists in some quarters respecting the truth of John's narrative wherein it is utterly new, as compared with the synoptical Gospels. Strauss and Renan have unceremoniously denied the truth of that part of John's record, which relates that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. It is a fiction of a later time they assert, or why was not such an all-important miracle related by Matthew, Mark and Luke ?

The answer, and I believe the true answer, is suggested by Grotius, the friend of Milton ; that Lazarus was alive during the time that the three Evangelists were writing their records, and they

would not mention Lazarus to draw any attention to him, because the enemies of Christ were seeking to kill him. An old writer says he withdrew from Jerusalem at the persuasion of the Apostles and became a missionary in Armenia, where he preached Christ, and declared the fact that Christ had raised him from the dead. When John published his Gospel at the close of the first century, Lazarus was dead, and John gave the history of his Divine Master's crowning miracle to the world.

Paley in his noble "Evidences," singles out the *ninth* chapter of John's Gospel as a master-piece of writing for its inimitable *verisimilitude*—a long word from the Latin, but a very expressive word—meaning "likeness to truth." You cannot read that chapter without feeling that it is the composition of an earnest eye and ear witness. But to my mind the *verisimilitude* is fully as evident and apparent in John's record of the raising of Lazarus and all its circumstantials, as in his relation of the miraculous giving of sight to the man who had been born blind by the Saviour.

I forbear to make further remarks on the fourth Gospel; and think you will agree with me that Strauss has no truth on his side when he asserts that nobody knows who wrote it—nobody knows who John was—nobody knows when his Gospel was written, or where it was written.

We have now brought out the *circumstantial*



*evidence* for the authenticity, genuineness, and authorship of the four Gospels, for the historical identity and real human existence of their authors, and above all, for the competence of the Evangelists to write the Gospels that bear their names. I have not performed my task as it might be performed with more time and more research ; but my own conscientious conviction is that Strauss has not an inch of ground to stand upon, when he denies that we know who wrote the Gospels, when they were written, and where they were written. His "Mythical System" which held me in bondage for twelve years, I feel has utterly lost its hold upon me—and I say it, thankfully.

I do not forget, however, that I evoked the presence of that intelligent and candid sceptic ; and let us suppose, if you please, that he is still present.

"Yes, sir," he will be saying, "I am here ; but you have not changed my convictions. I give you credit for your own belief that all is in favour of your conclusions ; but I have no such belief. I tell you again that I do not believe in miracles ; and so I hold that the Gospel miracles were never performed ; and that your "Gospel History" is no history at all. You may believe—I do not doubt that you honestly believe—the Gospels were written by the identical persons you think you have pointed out, and that they were written *when* and *where* you think you have succeeded in shewing they were

written. On the contrary, I hold that the theory of Strauss is not only a very probable theory, but that it is a most veritable theory : that it is the true way of accounting for the existence of these four ancient pieces of writing, called the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

“I am not disposed to deny that these books were in existence in the middle of the latter half of the second century : that is to say in the year 175. I do not question for one moment that which is granted by Strauss and all the existing school of freethinkers, and by Bolingbroke and the candid and scholarly freethinkers of the last century. But then, as Strauss shrewdly observes, 142 years—from A.D. 33 to A.D. 175—is ample time for the formation of these legendary books. I make no doubt that some four persons, who were companions, or associates of the companions, of this extraordinary and highly gifted enthusiast, Jesus of Nazareth, began to write these books : wrote some part of them : some comparatively short part. And that by the natural tendency of mankind in the state of ignorance, which is, universally, a state of childish wonder and superstition, the belief in the marvellous gradually expanded in the minds of the very early Christians ; and accounts of miracles were not only framed and credited, but added in writing to the first sketches of the Gospels. Other and still more marvellous stories would be added to these ; and

so, by successive accretions of marvels, these Four Gospels, as they are called, came to be what we see they are now, in the course of those 142 years, or by the year 175.

“And I further hold”—continues our sceptical friend—“that it is just as Strauss says: you may see the growth of the mythical element in these books, if you will read them with the critical faculty, and not with a blind and unexamining credence. When Jesus is related to have raised the dead, in the two earlier Gospels, it is a very unimportant and unimpressive affair. He enters a room where a maiden has just deceased, and restores her to life. The mythical element grows in the Third Gospel. The widow’s son of Nain is raised to life upon the very bier on which he had lain dead and was being carried, a corpse, to the grave. But what a startling increase of the legendary spirit there is when we come to the Fourth and last of these remarkable ancient books! Your “John,” as you call him, gives us the account of the Resurrection of Lazarus: a man who had not only been dead some time before he was interred, but who had been four days in the grave, and whose body, by his own sister’s account, was now in a state of decomposition.

“Doubtless, that story is one of very late formation. It could only have found belief among very ignorant and credulous people; or among people who had given themselves up so thoroughly to the

reception of marvellous tales that they could almost believe anything. I should think it very probable that it is one of the latest accretions of the marvellous to these ancient books. I don't at all think it unlikely that it was added to them very nearly as late as the very year 175 that has been mentioned."

Now, let us enquire into the possibility of what our sceptical friend advances as being true, namely, that the account of the resurrection of Lazarus in the Gospel of St. John is merely a marvellous tale which was added to that Gospel about, or nearly, as late as the year 175. And first, please bear it in mind that this is no question about printed books. Printed books: what, in A.D. 175? You know there was no printed book till more than a thousand years after that date. Please also bear it in mind that there was no collected New Testament at that time, it is not till years after that date that we learn there was a collected New Testament in use among the Christian Churches. In the year 175 the Four Gospels formed a volume—a written volume—by themselves. The Epistles of St. Paul also formed a written volume by themselves. The other books of the New Testament were still loose, in the form of tracts: they were not gathered into a third volume. Now, how many copies of the one written volume which contained the Four Gospels might there be in existence in the year 175?

"Stop, sir," says some one, "there is a previous

question, namely—What was the price of written books? You know, since the majority of professing Christians must be thought of as *poor*, they could not have many books among them, if books were dear, at that period of the world's history."

Let me entreat you to disabuse your minds of that belief, if you have believed that books were dear in the second century. They were dear in the tenth century, when scarcely anybody could write and read : they were dear in the 9th, 8th, 7th and 6th centuries ; and they were not cheap in the 5th. But books were really cheap in the second century. Thousands wrote books for a living, since there were many readers in the highly civilised period of the reigns of the " Good Emperors," as they were called.

Now, how many copies of the written volume containing the Four Gospels, may we fairly suppose, there were in existence in the year 175? You remember, Gibbon reckoned there were six millions of professing Christians in existence about the time that Constantine began to patronise Christianity—the year 313. Well, if there were six millions in 313, there would not be more than three millions, one would think, in 175. Now, among how many professing Christians shall we allot one copy of this volume? Andrews Norton, an American scholar and critic of eminence, thinks we should allot one copy to every 50 ; and he thinks that a

fair supposition, especially when we take into account the zeal of the ancient Christians and the high value they placed upon the Gospels. Perhaps, some one among my audience may say it is not likely that one copy would be found among every 50; better suppose one copy among every 100. Oh, but I would be more liberal still, and would say let us allot one written copy of the volume containing the Four Gospels among every 200 professing Christians. Now divide your three millions by 200, and what is the result? 15,000. 15,000 copies—written copies of the volume containing the Four Greek Gospels, in existence in the year 175.

Now comes the decisive question—How to get a false story so long as the account of the resurrection of Lazarus into 15,000 written copies of the volume containing the four Gospels, in the year 175? You know, if any of you possessed a scarce printed book—a book which had been long out of print—and you were to say, ‘I should like to have this book put into print again, and to have a story that I have written put into it and printed as if it had been an original part of the book; I can afford it, and I will have it done.’ And suppose you gave all into a printer’s hands, and ordered 100,000 copies of the book to be struck off. Well, that would spread the story as widely as the original book itself, and at once!

But, consider now, supposing some person living

at Antioch, or Ephesus, invented the account of the resurrection of Lazarus, and wrote it down in his own copy of the volume containing the four Gospels, *that* would not write it down in the volume possessed by any Christian living in Jerusalem, or in Rome, or at Corinth, or at Philippi, or at Thessalonica, or in any place where there was a Christian Church. The man who invented the story could not get it written down in the copy possessed by his next door neighbour, if his neighbour did possess a copy, without obtaining that neighbour's leave. How, then, to get the leave of 15,000 persons scattered over France, Italy, Greece, the Isles of the Archipelago, Asia Minor, the Holy Land, Egypt, and Northern Africa—15,000 professing Christians (for none else dared possess the Gospels), carrying their lives in their hands, and exposed to death—how, I say, to get the leave of 15,000 zealous believers in what they held to be Divine Truth, to write down a false and unauthorised story in their copies of the Gospels? The very supposition is absurd—preposterously absurd.

“Well, I must confess,” says our sceptical friend, “that I overshot the bolt in supposing the feat I described could be accomplished so late as A.D. 175. Yes, yes: it was an extreme, too extreme, a supposition; I grant that. But, sir, it could be accomplished, and doubtless was accomplished at some time earlier than that. You say the

Gospel of St. John was originally published about A.D. 98. Well, sir, from 98 to 175 is 77 years. During such a period of time as that—some time during the 77 years, I say, there must have been ample opportunity for inserting the imaginary story of the resurrection of Lazarus in the Fourth Gospel, and successfully passing it off as a really original and authentic and genuine part of that Gospel. No doubt of it.”

Now, let us see if there be any likelihood of truth in this *amended position*, as he deems it, of our sceptical friend. Who among the Fathers, did we say, were living in the last quarter of the second century? You may remember that we named as pre-eminent, Tertullian, Irenæus, and Clement of Alexandria. Of the three, let us take Irenæus. He was martyred at Vienne in France, for he was one of the early bishops of Lyons. About the year 175, the best critical scholars agree, Irenæus wrote his book against heretics. That book has come down to us. Listen to a few extracts from this book, I pray you :—

“Matthew, among the Hebrews, published a Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome, and founding a Church there. And after their departure (death), Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself, delivered to us in writing what Peter had preached; and Luke, the companion of Paul, re-



corded the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned upon his breast, likewise published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia."

Then he gives some fanciful reasons why there should only be four Gospels—such as that there are four quarters of the world, four cardinal winds, etc.—but all that was according to the fanciful taste of the time. I don't know but that our time is quite as fanciful, only our fancies are of another kind. Listen, I pray, to the remaining extracts:—

"The Gospel according to John declares His (Christ's) princely, complete, and glorious generation from the Father, saying 'In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.' The Gospel according to Luke, being of a priestly character, begins with Zacharias the priest offering incense to God. Matthew proclaims His human generation, saying, 'the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.' Mark begins with the prophetic Spirit, which came down from above to men, saying, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; as it is written in Isaiah the Prophet."

If you have listened to the extracts I have just read from Irenæus, you will not wonder that our sceptical Lord Bolingbroke, in his time,

together with Strauss and all sceptics who are scholars in our time, avow their belief that our Four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were in existence and were received by the Christian Church as early as the year 175.

But what more about Irenæus? He tells us that he learnt his Christianity from the venerable Polycarp, who was bishop of Smyrna—the ‘blessed Polycarp,’ Irenæus calls him; and he declares he has such a regard for his instructor, (‘who was afterwards a martyr for Christ when he was ninety years old’) that he can still mentally see and hear him, “his walks, the complexion of his life, and the form of his body, and his conversations with the people, and his familiar intercourse with John, as he was accustomed to tell, as also his familiarity with those that had seen the Lord.”

Irenæus gives us more accounts of Polycarp and his “familiar intercourse” with the beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus’ breast at supper, but let these suffice. Now, when was the alleged interpolation made in the Gospel of St. John? In the lifetime of that apostle himself? that apostle from whom Polycarp learned so much about Christ? that apostle whose prolonged life was so marked by increased attachment to his Lord? I say, was the alleged interpolation made in John’s own lifetime? Who can, for one moment, imagine that it was? What would the interpolator expect the beloved disciple to say about it?

“Resurrection of Lazarus!” he would have exclaimed; “where did you get such a story? Here is the Gospel that God has inspired me to write. His holy spirit has brought to my mind the very words of my Saviour at that sweet supper. But you will find no story about any resurrection of Lazarus in it? Who has dared to forge such a tale? There never was any resurrection of Lazarus, or I should have known of it. I was with my Master in Jerusalem, I was with Him in Galilee, I was with Him on the Lake of Gennesaret, I was with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, I was with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, I stood by His cross, and received the care of his dear mother from him ere He died, and I tell you there never was any resurrection of Lazarus. You must not have a false story like that in your books—away with it!”

We feel sure that no interpolator could have succeeded in getting a *false* account of the resurrection of Lazarus into St. John's Gospel during St. John's lifetime, and securing its reception by the Christian Church. Then, since the *amended* supposition of our sceptical friend is that the interpolation could certainly be successfully made somewhere between the years 98 and 175, could it possibly have been made in the lifetime of Polycarp? But what would the interpolator have felt sure that Polycarp would have said about it? for he could scarcely expect

that Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, one of the "seven churches" mentioned in the Apocalypse, would *not* hear of it.

"Resurrection of Lazarus!" Polycarp would have said; "where have you got that story? Do you say you are reading it out of a copy of the Gospel written by my teacher? Look! here is my copy of St. John's Gospel; I had it from the hand of an Ephesian copyist who made it with St. John's original Gospel before him. You see there is no such story here. Not a trace of it. Brethren, remember what our Lord said—that false and deluding teachers should come. You must not have that false story in your books—away with it! We can die for truth, and we may have to die for it to-morrow; but we cannot die for falsehood."

Who, after even one moment's consideration, does not feel sure that the supposed interpolation would be impossible in the lifetime of Polycarp? Then, lastly, could it be made in the lifetime of Irenæus? Remember, he was living in A.D. 175. But what would Irenæus have said when he saw the false story, or heard it read? And one cannot conceive it possible that such an interpolation should be made without Irenæus having a knowledge of it, for he was a man of action, and a traveller. He went to Rome with a message from the Christian Churches of France before he became Bishop of Lyons, and entered into correspondence with various

persons in different parts of the Christian world relative to the doctrines and customs of the Church ; he was no novice to whom the news of an interpolation in the Gospel of St. John would, very likely, never reach. What would Irenæus have said ?

“ Resurrection of Lazarus—*what* resurrection ?—*what* Lazarus ? Here is my copy of St. John’s Gospel. I had it from my martyred teacher, the holy Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of the beloved disciple, and often heard the substance of this very gospel from St. John’s own mouth. You will find no such story here. We never heard of it before. It was not left us as a testimony of either St. John or any other apostle. Away with it ! You must not have a false story in your books. We can die for truth, and we may have to die for it to-morrow ; but we cannot die for falsehood.”

Again, I say, who, after one moment’s consideration, does not feel sure that the account of the resurrection of Lazarus could not have been got into the copies of St. John’s Gospel in the lifetime of Irenæus ? And who does not feel that the connection of the names of Irenæus, and Polycarp, and St. John forms a chain of testimony—self-corroborative testimony—in itself of the truth of the Gospel History ? There are but three personal links in the chain, can you break one of them ? No ; you feel it is impossible to do that ; the links are so inseparably interwelded and connected. And what is the full

force of this self-corroborative testimony? That Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were the identical persons we understand them to have been; that they were real and competent testifiers to the truth of what they relate; that they gave up their lives to the spreading of this testimony; and that they exposed their lives to danger every day rather than desist from spreading this their testimony.

There cannot be stronger testimony of any facts than this testimony of theirs. If their testimony be not true, there is no true testimony in the world of any facts whatever: there are no facts! But sane men do not come to such a conclusion; sane men do not throw away such testimony as this. The world would then have not a single page of history to read, and would cut itself off from the possibility of learning anything from the written records of the past. True history is the most valuable boon bequeathed to us by the past generations of men; and these four gospels are the most valuable boon of all, for, thank God! they who wrote them were under the especial direction and holy guidance of God Himself.

I can imagine, after all that has been said, some one present who is still entangled in the net of unbelief, will be saying—"I should have liked your proofs better if they had not been so one-sided; if they had not all been given by Christians. Your evidences,' as you call them, are all 'part and

parcel of the same thing,' as they say in old Yorkshire. If you could give me some kind of 'evidence' from men who were *not* Christians, that the early 'history,' as it is called, of Christianity, and the existence of Christ himself, are facts, I should be more disposed to say the 'evidence' is worthy of belief."

But who could be expected to write a Life of Christ save a Christian? Who would write the life of a champion of Atheism in our day? A bishop of the established church could not be expected to do it. A Methodist minister would not write it. The theme could be no attraction save to a sceptical writer. And the "Life of Jesus," to form a solid rest for our belief, must be the work of those who were with him and saw and heard him.

Yet there is corroborative evidence for the truth of the early Christian history, and—by deduction—we may also say for the reality of Christ's existence, to be drawn from ancient sources which are *not* Christian. Some of you, no doubt, will be well acquainted with what Pliny and his friend Tacitus say about the ancient Christians. In the year 110, Pliny, the friend of the Emperor Trajan, becomes proconsul of Bithynia and Pontus, provinces near the Black Sea, and, at that time, abounding with Christians. The Christians were considered to have violated Trajan's law against secret societies, and many were brought up to the tribunal of Pliny

for judgment. He could discover no crime of which they were guilty. But he tells Trajan that he learned from their own confessions, that they were accustomed to meet together on a certain day of the week (Sunday); that they sang together a hymn in praise of their God, Christ; and that they bound one another to abstain from theft, adultery, falsehood, and so on.

Tacitus plainly tells us that, in the year 63—(the very year it is believed in which Peter and Paul were martyred at Rome)—Nero set Rome on fire; laid the blame on the Christians; crucified some of them; exposed others to be torn in pieces by dogs, after they had been sewn up in skins of wild beasts; and put others to death by having fire set to them after they had been covered with pitch, or sewn up in pitched shirts. Tacitus, as one might expect from a heathen philosopher, calls Christianity an “execrable superstition,” but affirms that it was derived from Christ, who was put to death in Judea under Pontius Pilate. Is not this something like corroborative evidence from an enemy of the truth of the early Christian history?

The satirist, Juvenal, who lived under Nero, alludes to the burnings of the Christians in their pitched shirts, and so does his brother satirist, Martial. Suetonius, writing of what took place under the Emperor Claudius, in 53, is also understood to make mention of Christ.



Nor let it be forgotten that the Emperor Julian, Hierocles and Porphyry, who professedly wrote against Christianity, never for a moment called in question the existence of Christ, or the fact that he had wrought miracles. And Celsus, who was the cotemporary of Irenæus and Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, in his work against Christianity, which was answered by Origen, proves for us that the Gospels were then in existence, for he quotes them over and over again, and shews that Christians valued them highly.

To my own mind, the fulfilment of our Lord's prophecy respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, is one of the most striking proofs of the truth of Christianity. Not only Josephus, but Tacitus himself helps us to survey the dire picture in its reality, which had been so clearly described by Christ 37 years before "the eagles gathered where the carcase was"—before the eagled legions under Titus came to surround the 'doomed city; 37 years before "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet" was seen "standing in the holy place;" 37 years before "Jerusalem was compassed with armies" and the "desolation" thereof came, and therewith came such "days of affliction" as had "not been from the creation of the world."

In the year 70 the prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter. Not one stone was left upon another of that gorgeous temple which Herod had so

recently beautified. In spite of resistance almost unparalleled in its madness, the Romans burst in upon the nearly famished defenders of the city. Titus issued a commandment that the Jews, as a nation, should cease to exist; that their city should be razed to its foundations, and should never again be called "Jerusalem." And its name was not restored till the reign of Constantine.

And its condition and the condition of the Jews, even now, are standing proofs of the truth of Christ's prophecy. The site of the temple is devoted to the religion of their persecutors, and yet a crowd of despised, crouching Jews cling to the quarter, near the ruined walls, where they are allowed to live. Once a week they are permitted to enter "the Place of Wailing," where they turn towards a wall of bevelled stones which belonged to their ancient city, and kiss the very stones with tears, while they pray for Jerusalem! Oh, who does not long for the conversion and restoration of God's ancient people?

Yonder is the "Mount Zion" of David, and yonder is the other mount whereon stood the Courts of the House of the Lord; but there is no temple of Jehovah now! There is no more "holy of holies;" no more golden candlestick. Yonder is the figure of it in Rome, on the triumphal arch of Titus, for he displayed it among the spoils as he entered Rome. There is no table of shewbread; no altar of incense;

no ark of the covenant ; no vail of the Temple ; no high-priest ; no assemblages of priests ;—*and no sacrifice!* And Passover time returns, and they keep it yearly—but *there is no Paschal Lamb killed and eaten!* The Jews have ceased to sacrifice, have ceased to kill the Paschal Lamb, in every part of the world !

Why have they ceased? You ask them, and they are dumbfounded. They do not see that God has caused them to cease, for the real sacrifice has now been offered up, and the real Paschal Lamb has been slain. From China to the Cape of Good Hope—from England, across the Atlantic, to the New World—the Hebrew is to be found, with his peculiar and still unaltered physiognomy—for his picture remains on the walls of the tombs of the old Egyptian kings. He belongs to the people “scattered and peeled”—dwelling yet on the earth as a warning to rebellious men, and a living proof of the truth of prophecy.

I just now mentioned the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. Who can ponder on Paul's history without feeling that it must be regarded as part of the evidence for the truth of Christianity? Paul's existence and course of life, and the writing of his letters to the Christian Churches, are held to be facts by all the German and French schools of scepticism ; and that “Reverend” Robert Taylor that I mentioned to you, who some fifty years ago

was a favourite of the London freethinkers, holds by the same facts. But what a puzzling contradiction it seems for men to acknowledge the reality of the life and recorded acts of Paul as facts, and yet to deny the truth of Christianity.

What! Paul a real man and Christ a myth? Paul a real existence; Paul, who wrote so much about Christ so soon after his death and resurrection; Paul a real existing man, and Christ's existence a fable? Paul, who held the clothes of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, while they stoned him to death? Then Stephen was also a real existing man, who died, praying, "Lord Jesus! receive my spirit!" Paul, the glorious half-missionary, half-mechanic, who crossed the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, and visited so many shores preaching Christ, and yet there never was any Christ to preach? Paul, a real living man, who had seen and conversed with Peter, and James, and John? Then they were all real living men. How came they to say what they did about Christ if He never existed? How came they to speak of His miracles to the people who must have seen Christ's wondrous acts, if ever He performed them? Must they not have expected the people to say, "You are impostors! no such miracles were ever performed!" Yet no one said this. Even the worst enemies of Christ did not deny His miracles, though they attributed them to Satanic agency.

What motive could the apostles have for deceiving the world? How came they to say that Christ had done such wondrous deeds of power and goodness, and that they had witnessed them, if He either never existed, or never performed His miracles? They could not be mistaken if they possessed the natural senses of men. They could not be mistaken either about Christ's personal identity after He rose from the dead. It was only on the Friday He was crucified, and the resurrection took place early on Sunday morning, and in the same evening He appeared to them and conversed with them. They could not have forgotten His form and features so soon—the form and features they knew so well.

Could their motive for deception have been a selfish and ambitious one? Is it possible that the men who had piety and purity perpetually on their lips were false-hearted schemers? "Did they go about lying to teach virtue?" to use Paley's masculine thought.

Look at the conduct of the apostles after Pentecost, and then, unless we are as senseless as stones, we must, without a grain of doubt, be convinced of their honesty. During Christ's lifetime they never fully understood who their Master was, what He came to do, or what they had to do themselves. They were always looking for Him to begin His open part as a temporal Messiah. They expected

Him to drive the Romans away, sit on David's throne at Jerusalem, and let them sit on His right hand and His left hand. That was still their dream even after His resurrection. The last question to Him on earth was, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" That is to say, Wilt Thou drive the Romans away and sit on David's throne, and let us sit on Thy right hand and left?

You know what the Lord replied—"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power." He did not encourage their prurient curiosity any more than He indulged their earthly spirit. And I take the liberty to say, that I think Christ would have snubbed some of these "second coming" people, if He had lived in our day. I mean the people who will have their favourite belief for breakfast, dinner, and supper, and who say no minister preaches the Gospel unless he proclaims the "second coming" in every sermon. I do not mean that there is to be no second coming of Christ, but I think He Himself would check the absurd heat there is in some people's minds on this point if He were living in our day.

Manifestly, He did not encourage their wish when the apostles put their last question to Him, but told them to go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the

name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. "And, lo!" said He, "I am with you to the end of the world." He was *with them*: that was to be their encouragement and support, not the hot and restless expectations about His "second coming." And they were to wait at Jerusalem, *not* for His "second coming;" but for the descent of the Holy Spirit, who should guide them and show them what they had to do.

"A *cloud* received Him from their sight"—the Schekinah, one feels persuaded, it must have been—and away they went to Jerusalem, their hearts burning full of love to their dear Lord, and their souls full of faith in Him. They continued all with one accord in prayer, and were together in one place, when the Holy Spirit descended upon them in the form of distributed (*not* "cloven") tongues of fire, and they arose and spake with tongues, and the multitude who crowded upon them and heard them expressed great amazement.

Now, when the "baptism of fire" had been received, the apostles knew what they had to do; they understand it now. They know their work is to be a spiritual work, and they set about it in thorough earnest, and the infant church is at once composed of three thousand souls. Listen to Peter, who has become the speaker among the apostles; listen to him addressing the wondering crowd after the healing of the lame man at the beautiful gate of the

temple ; listen to him and remember that some of that very crowd might have cried, "Crucify Him !" in Pilate's ears but a few weeks before.

"Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses. Repent therefore, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord !"

"The priest and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees, came upon" the Apostles as they taught and "laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day." And when, the next day, they are brought up before the high priest and his friends, they testify, while the restored lame man stands beside them—"By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by him, doth this man stand before you whole."

The high priest and his friends cannot deny that a "notable miracle" has been wrought, so they let them go after a little threatening. But the work of the "unlearned and ignorant men," as they were deemed, spreads till it shakes Jerusalem, and the high priest and his friends of the sect of the Sadducees are "filled with indignation," and seize the Apostles and put them this time in the common prison. "But the angel of the Lord, by night,



opened the prison doors and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this life." And so, when the officers found the prison locked and bolted next morning but the prisoners gone, the high authorities are in an alarm.

"Did we not straitly command you," says the high priest to the apostles when they are once more brought before him, "that you should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us!"

"We ought to obey God rather than men," answers Peter and the other apostles. What a change in Peter! Lately, when left to himself—for God has to leave us to ourselves when we grow over-confident, in order that we may discover our weakness—when left to himself, I say, a poor servant maid frightened him, and he denied his Master. See him now, when the Holy Spirit fills his soul! "We ought to obey God rather than men," he says to the high priest. He cares neither for high priest or low priest, nor would he have cared for the whole Sanhedrim, if they had been present frowning upon him.

"And when they had beaten them and commanded them again not to speak in the name of Jesus, they let them go." But the apostles "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were

counted worthy to suffer shame for His name!" No more thought about sitting on His right hand and left—no zest for worldly honour. They know it is to be suffering and persecution to the end ; but they rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, and can shout—"Welcome the shame—welcome the suffering—welcome the persecution!"

Did any apostle ever say before he died, "It is all a sham. Christ never rose from the dead. It was only a juggle that we contrived that we might get something by it!" What ; the men who were stoned in the street—hunted from city to city—and some of them put to death? Oh, nay ; their saying was of another kind. "Do what you will with us. Cast us to the lions—burn us alive—crucify us, as you crucified our Master, take our lives in what way you choose, but we still tell you Christ is risen from the dead. We have seen Him, and spoken with Him, and received his command to preach His name. And we must tell it, and we will tell it, for we feel the power of His resurrection in our own souls!"

And they did tell it, and God helped them, and the truth of Christ spread over many lands, and it is spreading still ; and thank God it has spread to us, and I trust many of us feel its power. Oh, let us all try to spread it still more. Will you, young men, get these evidences into your minds, and

rehearse them in the ears of your sceptical acquaintances? Will some of you devote yourselves to a new mission, and live solely to spread these evidences? I have felt myself alone for these fourteen years, while constantly traversing this our loved British ground in every direction. There ought to be at least one hundred men in these realms devoting themselves entirely to this work. Will some of you young men—I ask again, and ask earnestly—prepare yourselves for this championship of the truth of Christ? Get these evidences into your minds, I entreat you; but above all, get “Christ formed in your hearts, the hope of glory.” That will make you eager and valiant soldiers for your Lord. May God make us all His true soldiers, and enable us to fight the good fight of faith, that at last we may win the crown of life, for Christ’s sake.

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