THE

DEIST'S REPLY

TO THE

ALLEGED SUPERNATURAL EVIDENCES

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

BOSTON

Deposited in Mass. District Clerk's Office 23d. Febr. 1836

THE DEIST'S REPLY

See vol. II. page 13.

TO THE

Lysander Spooner, Prof.

ALLEGED SUPERNATURAL EVIDENCES

Recd. at the Dept. of State April 7th 1836.

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

BY LYSANDER SPOONER.

PRESENTED TO THE CLERGY GENERALLY IN BOSTON.

BOSTON:

1836.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I. The Early Spread of Christianity, - - - - - - - - - - 1.
——— II. The Nature and Character of Jesus, - - - - - - - - - 7.
———III. The Alleged Miracles of Jesus, - - - - - - - - - - 18.
———IV. The Prophecies, - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 40.
——— V. The Resurrection, - - - - - - - - - - - - - 50.

THE DEIST'S REPLY.

CHAPTER I.

The Early Spread of Christianity.

There are some believers, who place little confidence in the evidence of the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus, who yet say that the establishment of such a religion as his, by such means as were employed after his death, is of itself a convincing miracle. They say it is incredible that the preachers of a religious system, the most prominent doctrine of which was that the Son of God, its founder, was slain, should have met with such success, unless God had miraculously aided them. They, in short, say substantially, that the very idea of the Son of God and the Saviour of the world being put to death ignominiously and like a criminal, is on the face of it so absurd, and so repugnant to all men's notions of what is probable, and of what would consist with the proper character for such a being to assume, that unless some supernatural influence had been exerted to aid in gaining for it belief, men never would have believed it.

Now, the absurdity and improbability of this doctrine, in the abstract, being acknowledged, let the question be put, whether it be any less absurd or improbable on account of its having been *believed?* If not, then here is an alleged miracle to be inquired into, of a different kind from those, on the evidence of which the Bible professes mainly to rest its claims to credit; a sort of incidental miracle, in fact, apparently not at all intended to furnish evidence of the truth of the Bible.

It is a little remarkable that any, professing to believe the Bible, should abandon, as insufficient, the evidence which its authors represent to have been expressly designed to convince men of its truth, and should thus seize upon an after circumstance of so doubtful a character as this. Yet one, who attempts to meet believers on their own grounds, must of necessity answer many arguments no more rational than this, or suffer them to believe on; for very slight and flimsy evidence is sufficient to satisfy the minds of such as are both determined to believe, and afraid to disbelieve.

But if it shall appear that this system, absurd and improbable as its main doctrine is, might have been propagated without its having, or being aided by, any miraculous power, then the argument, against the truth of the doctrine, to be drawn from its absurdity and improbability, will be entitled to what would have been its just weight, independent of the system's having been believed at all. The only ground, that believers of the present day could then take, on this point, would be this, viz, that their astonishment, that men should ever have been so credulous as to believe so improbable and absurd a system, is so great, that they themselves will now believe it too.

Let us then inquire into the causes of the success of the Apostles, and see whether they were not natural ones.

One of the most efficient of these causes, was the *manner* in which they preached. That alone was calculated to make a very strong impression upon the minds of such as were too ignorant or simple, (and such the first converts will hereafter appear generally to have been,) to judge rationally of the truth of the statements they heard, and the soundness of the religious doctrines, that were taught. The manner of all the Apostles must have exhibited a great deal of sincerity and zeal, (for they were undoubtedly honest in their faith,) and nothing makes so favorable an impression upon the minds of men in general, in favor of those, who advocate new doctrines; nothing inclines them so much to listen willingly to all they have to say, as an appearance, on their part, of perfect sincerity and simplicity.

Another trait in the manner of some of them, particularly of Paul, who appears to have been by far the most efficient apostle, was boldness. The exhibition of this quality always powerfully affects the imaginations of the weak and ignorant, of whom the early converts were evidently composed.

The question is often asked, how is the boldness and zeal of the Apostles to be accounted for, when they knew they had no worldly honors to expect, but, on the contrary, persecution, and the contempt of a large portion of the community, wherever they should go? To answer this question, it is necessary to refer to what was the condition of these men, (with the exception of Paul) when they first became the disciples of Jesus. They were obscure, illiterate, simple and superstitious men—men of no importance as citizens either in their own own eyes or the eyes of others. They had never looked to worldly honors or promotions; but evidently had expected from their youth up, to pass their days in the obscurest paths and humblest walks of life. The contempt of those above them had no terrors for such men as

these—they had never aspired to be their equals, and they were willing, because, in whatever situation they might be, they had always expected, to be despised by them as a matter of course, on account of their degraded conditions of mind and fortunes. Still, at the same time, to be at the head of even little sects and bands of those, who had once been their equals, and to be looked up to by them as guides, was a distinction adapted to excite most powerfully the ambition of these men, however much they might be despised by all but their followers. They, by becoming, and being acknowledged as, the teachers of others, acquired an importance, of which a few years before they had never dreamed. They owed whatever of worldly consequence they possessed entirely to the fact of their being esteemed leaders by their proselytes. Simple, artless and sincere as these men were, such circumstances were calculated to attach them strongly to the cause in which they were engaged, although they might not be aware of being so influenced.

They also attached the greatest importance to a belief in the doctrines, that they preached. They esteemed themselves the agents of God, commissioned to save men's souls. They looked upon their employment as of the most momentous consequence; and their imaginations, unbalanced by reason and reflection, were intensely excited by such views of their duty.

But there was another cause, perhaps more powerful than all these together. These simple men had been convinced that Jesus was no less a personage than the Son of God. They had been honored, as they thought by being made his bosom friends, while he was on the earth, and his immediate and most conspicuous agents after his death, for accomplishing a design, which to their minds, was the most magnificent that could be conceived. He had, by telling them beforehand of the dangers and difficulties, and obloquy they were to encounter from those whom they had been taught to consider the enemies of God, and by promises that he would always be with them on earth, and that he would extravagantly reward them in heaven, if they should persevere and be faithful, wrought them up to a pitch of fanaticism calculated to make them look on all the opposition of men as unimportant nothings. "Blessed are ye," said he, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding *glad*, for great is your reward in heaven—for so persecuted they the prophets, which were before you." Can any considerations be imagined more likely to render these simple fanatics alike indifferent to every thing worldly, whether of hardship or comfort, of prosperity or adversity, of honor or shame? Yes. Jesus found pictures, even more inflammatory than these, to operate upon their untutored imaginations. He said to them, "ye are they, which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a *kingdom*, as my father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at *my table*, *in my kingdom*, and sit on Thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke, 22—28 to 30.)*

It is useless to comment upon the natural effects of such language as this, upon such men as those, to whom it was addressed, and who implicitly believed in the reality of what was promised to them. Perhaps no other picture can be imagined, that would have so powerfully fired the imagination of these credulous men, as this, offered to them, as it was, by one whom they believed to be the Son of God! It all looked probable to them, notwithstanding its extravagance. They had on earth sat with him at table—why should they not also in heaven? They knew too that there were twelve tribes of Israel, and their own number was also twelve, apparently selected with reference to the number of tribes to be ruled over. The whole prospect must have been, to them, a gorgeous reality. The effect was such as might have been expected. These men had their minds engrossed by the grandeur of their designs, and the grandeur of their promised reward. They had nothing to attach them to this world, or to make them regard the esteem of men. One great purpose forever stimulated and urged them on, and hurried them from place to place, wherever a convert could be made. It made them fearless of death, fearless of men, fearless, in fact, of all worldly consequences. It gave to them vastly more of boldness, zeal and perseverance, than could have been easily inspired by other means, in men naturally so timid and spiritless.

Perhaps it will be said that the writings of the New Testament display talents inconsistent with the idea that their authors were intellectually so weak as I have represented them. To this objection I answer, that from the beginning to the end of the New Testament, there is displayed little wit or wisdom for Christians to be proud of. Besides, it should be recollected that these writings were not executed until the authors had generally, for several years, been engaged in the employment of preachers—an employment adapted to call into exercise, and thus to increase, the little powers they originally possessed. And yet the benefit of this long course of education has only enabled them, with a few exceptions, to furnish narratives and epistles, which, with all the advantage they may be supposed to have derived from the translations of such learned men as would be likely to improve upon the style and expressions of the original, come very near being the most simple, and the most destitute of thought, of any to be found in the English language.

If men were but to read the New Testament with the same tone and emphasis, with which

* This promise was probably understood, at the time it was made, as referring to temporal thrones; but after the departure of Jesus, was applied by the apostles to heavenly ones.

they do other books, and were to keep out of mind the idea of its being sacred, they would be disgusted with the credulity, and the want of intellect, reason and judgment, that is apparent in it. The imaginations of believers have dressed up and exaggerated the excellence of the style and matter of the New Testament *generally*, in the same manner, in which they have the moral instructions of Jesus. They have done this in the same manner, in which we may suppose the imaginations of the people of all nations, that have books esteemed sacred, gloss over and exaggerate the excellence of their contents.

The larger portion of the "Acts of the Apostles," separate from the insipidity of the narrative, contain the most extraordinary exhibitions of lack of judgment and intellectual resource, that can easily be found on record.

To support these assertions, let me ask those, who have been accustomed to look at the writings of the New Testament as *inspired*, to look at them for once as uninspired, (which is the only proper way of regarding them until their inspiration be clearly proved;) to read them with no more reverence than they would read any other book; to read them as being what they really purport to be, viz, nothing but narratives, and letters of exhortation and instruction; let them, in short for once read the books critically, discarding all idea of their being sacred, and I have little doubt their opinions will then concur with those here expressed.

Paul was in some respects distinguishable from the other Apostles. He had some talents, although a muddy intellect, and little judgment. He was violent, precipitate and unreflecting. He was bigoted, superstitious and dogmatical in his first faith, and little less so in his last. He was self-confident, boastful* and dictatorial to a disgusting degree. His *forte* was in teaching doctrines, the utility or reason of which, inasmuch as nobody else has understood, he probably did not understand himself. He was also crafty and deceitful, without appearing to reflect at all upon the character of such conduct; and this fact shows, either that he was not a rigid moralist in principle, or that he had very obtuse moral perceptions. His readiness to practice deception is exhibited in the following instances. He circumcised Timotheus to cheat the Jews, as appears by Acts 16—3. "Him would Paul have to go forth with him, and took and circumcised him, because of the Jews which were in those quarters, for they knew all that his father was a Greek." When imprisoned at Phillippi, he falsified, and said he was a Roman, (Acts 16—37, 38) to alarm and impose upon those who had imprisoned him, supposing him to be, as he really was, a Jew. (Acts 16—20 and 21—Acts 22—3.) He repeated the same falsehood afterwards, and declared that he was a Roman "free-born," (Acts 22—27,28). This lie appears to have been told because some expedient of the kind seemed necessary to extricate him from the trouble he had got himself into.† Moreover he was ambitious, and appears to have been disposed in some cases, to turn his labors to a better worldly account than the other Apostles.‡ He was also revengeful, as appears by his second Epistle to Timothy 4—14. "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil, the Lord reward him according to his works." A wish, in which superstition and a vulgar spirit of revenge are more ludicrously combined, was perhaps never recorded, or even expressed.

That his pretence, before alluded to, of *having been caught up into heaven*, was all a fabrication, (instead of an account of a dream, which I suppose christians will think it to have been,) is rendered probable by the nature of the story, by the fact that he would not relate what he heard there, by his own bad character for veracity, by the necessity he was in of telling a marvellous story of some kind, and the circumstance that he thought it best to preface it (2d. Cor. 11—31) with the declaration that "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed forevermore, knew that he was *not* lying."

Let us now look at the character of the people who became converts. In the first place, the people, *in general*, among whom the Apostles preached, are proved to have been a simple, spiritless race of beings, from the facts that they appear to have had no laws, but to have been governed entirely by the will of a single deputy of the Roman power, who ruled over

* See his ridiculous boast (2 Cor. 12—1 to 5) that he was the man who had been caught up into the *third* heaven, (query—how many heavens are there in all?) and had there heard certain sounds, which he declined repeating, on the pretence that it would be *unlawful* for him to do so. This journey to paradise, therefore, was labor lost, unless the story of it, united with his declarations (2 Cor. 11—5—2 Cor. 12—11) that "he was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles," and his other boastful pretences, of which the last named chapters are full, served some purpose in gaining him credit among those, whose backwardness to regard him, he virtually says, (2 Cor: 12—11) "*compelled* him" to brag a little; although, modest man! he would not for the world be thought "to glory of himself, but in his infirmities." (2 Cor. 12—5.)

† Perhaps some explanation may be given to this declaration of Paul; I here state only what appears on the face of the matter.

‡ 2d. Cor. 11—8. "I *robbed* other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service." It may well be doubted, one would think, whether the last clause of this verse gives his real reason for an act, which he seems to admit, in the first clause, to be unjust.

them merely for the purpose of sponging from them as large a share, as he could, of their property, for the support of the grandeur of the Roman nation. It is probable, too that few could read, since but few in the most enlightened parts of the world could at that time read. Printing not being known, the books that then existed must have been in manuscript, and of course, must have been few and but little circulated. The people generally having no concern in the management of the affairs of government, and considering themselves, as they really were, the despised subjects or slaves of the Romans, they had no national or individual spirit to keep them from sinking into the most contemptible intellectual degradation. It is probable that few people are now to be found on the earth more destitute of every thing like character, than were the great portion of those, among whom the apostles preached. We see, by the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles, that they were addicted to the most petty and contemptible vices, and the most ludicrous and disgusting superstitions—believing in ghosts, and devils, and visions, and dreams, and evil spirits, and sorceries, in *prophetesses!* (Acts 21—9) in the power of speaking with tongues, in miracles, in witchcraft, and apparently in all the other absurdities that superstition ever gave rise to. They were always agog for something new and marvellous in religious matters—indeed they appeared to care for little else. These credulous beings were continually imposed upon by men "boasting themselves to be somebody," as, for example, one Judas, and one Theudas, who got sects after them, (Acts 5—36 and 37.) Their readiness to believe in every thing, that appeared to them to be miraculous, cannot be more plainly, or perhaps more ludicrously shown, than it is in Acts 5—15 and 16, where it appears that they brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds, so that "at least the *shadow* of Peter passing by might *overshadow* some of them." It appears also by Acts 19—12, that sick persons were *cured*, and *evil spirits* cast out by the efficacy of *the handkerchiefs and aprons that had been about the person of Paul!* What sort of "evil spirits" were probably cast out by the sight of Paul's *handkerchiefs?* Or how bad was the "sickness" that could have been cured by these means? Can any one doubt, that if the handkerchiefs of another person had been used, and had been *called Paul's*, so as to deceive the diseased person, the same *miracles* would have been wrought? Or can a man of common sense want any further proof that this affair of being possessed of devils, of which there are so many stories in the New Testament, and the supposed miraculous cures of diseases, were all shams—the mere works of the imaginations of those, who were of the number of the veriest simpletons that ever bore the name of men?

There is another account equally ridiculous, beginning at the 13th verse of Acts 19th, which shews what a stupid, superstitious and senseless race of beings some of those were, among whom Paul preached. It seems that some vagrant Jews attempted to cast out these evil spirits by uttering, over those that were supposed to be possessed of them, these magical words, "we adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." It appears that they had adopted this method with one, and that "the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" and then, instead of coming out of the man, it caused him (as the lookers-on supposed) to fly pell-mell at these impostors, and bruise, and beat, and strip them, and drive them out of the house. Now any yankee boy, a dozen years old, would see through such an affair at once; but when this came to be noised abroad, people looked upon it as an *awful judgment from God*, upon those who had attempted, for their own benefit, or without proper authority, to use the name of Jesus as a word of magic to exorcise devils. And the writer adds that this affair converted many, that "fear fell on them all," "that the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified," and he closes the account by saying, "so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed!"

It would be using the name of God profanely to introduce it into so contemptible a display of the credulity and superstition of those half-witted creatures, and of the manner in which they were imposed on by their own imaginations, were it not that it is necessary to do so, in order to expose the almost incredibly ridiculous absurdities, that men of the present day, without reflection, and as a matter of course, take for sacred and important truth.

In this case we have an exhibition of the *amount* of argument and evidence, that was necessary in the Apostles' time to make a convert to Christianity. And unless the Clergy can deny this transaction, I should think it might be well for them to say no more about the difficulties of propagating the Christian religion.

The fact also, that a large portion of the early Christians believed the books now composing the "Apocryphal New Testament," tells a tale that cannot be gainsayed for a moment. It confirms all I have said, and more than I have said, of the simplicity, credulity and superstition of those, who first embraced Christianity. It is no answer to these facts to say that there were some enlightened men in the countries where Christianity first spread. The mass were otherwise. And especially those, who first became converts, were such as I have described. And any man of common mind, who will read the "Apocryphal New Testament," must say that men, who would swallow such stories, could easily be brought to believe any thing whatever, that fanatics or impostors could ever wish to make them believe.

With such a people, the more extravagant and marvellous a doctrine or narrative was, the better. In fact it was absolutely necessary that it should be so to a great degree, else they would not have listened to it for a moment. Imagine then such a reckless, headstrong, violent man as Paul, travelling from place to place, sometimes with his head shaved, (Acts 18—

18 ;) preaching even in the streets of cities, wherever he could get a crowd of the populace around him, telling men that the Son of God had been on earth in the form of a man, and had been cruelly slain ; but that he had returned to life again; that he himself had been supernaturally converted, and had been appointed to preach for Jesus, to cure the sick and to cast out devils ; telling them also that he was ready to cast out all the devils and heal all the sick they would bring to him ; and is it strange, or unnatural, any thing more than might have been expected, any thing more than a matter of course, that multitudes should have been, some of them enraged, and others astonished, attracted and deluded, by such a strange innovation, and such an unaccountable attempt to upturn their accustomed religious observances, by the introduction of such novel and unheard-of notions? Such *was* the effect. If any one wish to form an idea of the excitement, that Paul sometimes caused, let him read the 19th chapter of Acts, and see what a hurly-burly and uproar was occasioned at Ephesus by his having preached there, and got a sect after him.

The novel character of the doctrines taught by the Apostles, and the marvellous nature of their stories about Jesus, constituted the bait, by which the people were caught at every step. And the success of this bait was aided by that credulousness, which brought the imaginations of those who were sick, or who only imagined themselves sick, (for such an abundance of sick people has seldom been heard of in any other case,) and the imaginations of those, who supposed themselves possessed of devils, to assist in working what they called miracles. When we consider that there were *twelve* of these preachers, all engaged in preaching the same doctrines in various places, and that these doctrines were different from all others then believed, it is natural, if each preacher made the number of converts, which he would be likely to, that in a few years this sect must have become numerous, and from being widely scattered over the country, must have attracted the notice and curiosity of all.

Such then was the manner in which this sect was *planted*—other means afterwards contributed to cultivate and rear it. The soil we have seen was adapted to the nature of the plant—it was a rich compost of ignorance, superstition and credulity. During the lives of the twelve, they, by their personal labors, accomplished much, and it appears that they authorized many of the new converts to become their fellow laborers. In process of time the gospels were written, and these writings gave the Christians a decided advantage over those whom they were laboring to supplant. They thus became supplied with something, to which they could refer as an *authority* for what they preached. They could then produce *written* evidence, and such evidence too as would be likely to be satisfactory to a very large number of the credulous persons of that day. Since few books were then written at all, and since the greater portion of the people had probably no acquaintance with such as were written, they (if they were like those of the present day who are equally unlearned) would not presume to doubt or scrutinize the truth of any thing, which should appear in the form of a *book*. Not having any religious books of their own, the fact, that the religious doctrines of the Christians, and that the accounts of the marvellous circumstances under which those doctrines were communicated, should be *written*, was doubtless of itself, to them, a very wonderful affair, and was remarkably calculated to impress them with the idea that whatever the Apostles had told them must be true.

Another circumstance, which most powerfully contributed to the spread of Christianity, was, that the importance, which the Christians attached to a belief in their faith, was so great as always to keep awake among them a fanatical spirit of proselytism—a circumstance, which before their time had probably never been known to exist, on an extended scale, in favor of any other system.

The natural effect of these various causes would be to build up a great and numerous sect of Christians even in a few years. At length they began to be persecuted, and if persecution had the effect then, that it invariably does *now*, it must have powerfully aided the progress of their cause.

Another circumstance, which prevents the spread of Christianity, in the early periods of its existence, from being any thing remarkable, is, that it had nothing like a regular system to contend with, in those places where it spread. The few heathenish notions, that men had about "the Gods," and about religion, had no foundation in any written authorities, but only in the vague and unaccountable traditionary superstitions of the people of those times. The Jews had a written system of theology, and Christianity could make few converts among them, although it pretends to have been more especially designed for them. In modern times it has made no considerable progress among any people, who have a written system of their own to appeal to—whereas if it had the least particle of miraculous power, it certainly would triumph over all other systems, whether they were written ones or not.

If any further evidence be wanted that the spread of Christianity was not supernatural, look at the spread of Mormonism, and see how, even at this day, and in this country, a miserable vagabond of a "Joe Smith," in a short space of time, can put a large community in an uproar, and raise up a numerous sect of followers, full of faith and fanaticism, eager to believe any thing marvellous in relation to the book of Mormon, and the Mormon prophet, and ready to make any effort and any sacrifice for the propagation of the momentous truths of their Revelation. Look also at the success of Edward Irving's attempts to make persons "*speak with tongues*," &c. in England, and at the spread of St. Simonianism in France. Look even at the camp-meet-

ings and revivals here in New England, and observe to how great a degree the timid and superstitious will surrender their understandings to the guidance of any ranting parson, who has impudence, hypocrisy, and coolness enough to put on a solemn cadaverous face, and talk judiciously to them about hell, the devil, and other kindred matters. These things illustrate the credulity of mankind in matters of this sort, and the ease with which a system might succeed in a superstitious and ignorant age, especially if the propagators had a few marvellous stories to relate, and could perform works that would pass for miracles ; and after it had succeeded for a time, it would become so incorporated into the institutions and customs of the people that it would thereafterwards be believed as a matter of course, and without inquiry ; in the same manner, for example, as Christianity is now by the great mass of those who believe it at all.

The fact, that some of the Apostles suffered martyrdom rather than renounce their faith, has been looked upon as evidence that they were engaged in the cause of truth. But martyrdom is evidence only of a man's honesty—it is no evidence that he is not mistaken. Men have suffered martyrdom for all sorts of opinions in politics and in religion ; yet they could not therefore have all been in the right ; although they could give no stronger evidence that they believed themselves in the right.

The Apostles undoubtedly supposed they had seen Jesus perform miracles, and that, in circulating their accounts of him, they were telling the truth. They undoubtedly believed that they themselves could perform miracles of a certain kind, such as casting out devils, and healing the sick ; although in reality, as I think has been shewn, the imagination must have, in many instances, and probably in all, created the malady, and as really, in all cases effected the cure, if there were any cure. But the Apostles, being simple men, understood nothing of the power of the imagination ; and therefore honestly believed that all that appeared was real. They themselves were as superstitious as those to whom they preached. This fact is proved by such circumstances as these, viz. Paul *had his head shaved because he had a vow,* (Acts 18—18). Paul imagined himself forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach in particular places, (Acts 16—6 & 7). The Apostles commanded the converts to abstain from things strangled, as if there were a wickedness in eating such, (Acts 15—28 & 29). When a young man had fallen from a window, he was taken up apparently lifeless, (as persons frequently are after a fall) ; but on his reviving, it was esteemed a miracle, as well by Paul himself, it would seem, as by the bystanders, (Acts 20—9). Peter imagined himself delivered from prison *by an angel*, (Acts 12—5 to 11) ; although the conduct of the supposed angel was precisely such as we may reasonably suppose would have been that of a man, who should have attempted to liberate him. For example, a *light* shone in the room, (as would have been the case if a man had gone in, for he would have undoubtedly carried a light in with him) ; the supposed angel struck or touched him on the side, (to wake him evidently, just as a man would have done) ; "*raised him* up," and said to him, "arise up quickly, gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals, cast thy garments about thee, and *follow me*," (precisely as a man would have directed him). It is evident that the guard must have been asleep, whether the being, who liberated Peter, were an angel or a man ; for Peter was not detected in going out, although he would as likely have been when in the company of an angel, who should *walk before*, as this one is said to have done, as in the company of a man. Peter supposed that the gate opened of its own accord ; but he was liable to be mistaken as to this fact, because a man would be very likely to leave it open as he went in ; or if he did not leave it open, he would undoubtedly leave it in such a condition that he could open it readily, and without any such effort as a person walking behind him would be likely to observe. After they had thus left the prison, and "*had passed on through one street*," the supposed angel "departed from him"—probably he took one street, as a man would have done, and that Peter took another.

Now although this supposed angel conducted precisely as a man would have done, and although Peter said, at the time, that the whole transaction appeared to him like a dream, yet afterwards he said he knew certainly "*that the Lord had sent his* ANGEL to deliver him." This fact shews the superstition of the man, and his readiness to attribute, to the supernatural interference of Deity, occurrences that could be accounted for in a natural manner.

A paragraph, beginning at the 23d and ending at the 28th verse of Acts 28th, shews by how simple an affair Paul was led to imagine that the Lord had given up to destruction the Jews, whom theretofore Jesus had been supposed to be sent more especially to save ; and that it was his (Paul's) duty to abandon them, and preach to the Gentiles.

If any one wish for further evidence of the weakness and superstition of the Apostles, or their converts, let him read the Acts throughout, and if he be an unprejudiced man, he will see evidence enough of these facts at every step.

I must now suppose that the manner in which Christianity was propagated, has been pointed out so as to make it apparent that there was nothing miraculous in it. But if any will still insist that Christianity is a revelation from God, made to men to save their souls, let him, if he can, account for the fact that God did not cause it to be spread over the whole world at once, in a year, or day. It was as important, if this system be true, that it should be spread, as that it should be revealed, and God could have miraculously spread it, as easily as he could have miraculously revealed it. There is no sense in saying that he has committed to *men* the business of spreading this religion ; for it is manifestly absurd to suppose that he

would entrust to men the completion of a design, which he had *himself commenced*, and which it was so immensely important to have completed at once; when he must have known the beggarly success that men would meet with. How happens it then that the Christian, after eighteen centuries, is a religion of such limited prevalence? How happens it that this wonder-working Revelation, which set out to revolutionize and reform society, and save the human race, has not become more generally known in the world? Why, one reason is, that it is not, after all, quite so wonder-working an affair as it has been cried up to be. And another reason probably is, that the Almighty, instead of miraculously aiding its progress, *never has* miraculously aided it.

But, above all, how comes it to pass that such a sovereign cure for souls has not been more universally adopted *where it is known*? One reason may have been that men have often doubted whether souls have any mortal diseases; and another has been, that this alleged specific has found somewhat of an obstacle in the common sense and reason of mankind. Sensible men, particularly in modern times, have generally had *doubts*, or some thing more than doubts, whether this pretended revelation was after all any thing more than the offspring of superstition, delusion, or imposture. In short, they have *not believed* it. A considerable portion of the *male adults, who pretend to be Christians*, do not believe it. They wish to believe it; they think it *best* to believe it (because they think it useful)—they dread to disbelieve it—they have a sort of lingering reverence for it—they perhaps persuade themselves that, on the whole, they do believe it—yet they do not in reality. They have a *prejudice* in its favor—not a conviction of its truth founded on evidence. They cannot help suspecting that it is a thing not to be inquired into; that it is neither reasonable in itself, nor founded on reasonable evidence. One proof of this is found in the fact that they are afraid to have the community inquire into the evidences against it, or to have these evidences propagated, and this at a time too when it is the established policy of society to encourage discussions on other matters as being the surest means of eliciting the truth. The Clergy especially would shut out every thing like light, and stifle every thing like inquiry on this subject, and the miserable rant and declamation, to which, instead of arguments, they resort to effect these objects, shew that they are aware that Christianity will not bear an examination. Although they know that a large portion of the male part of the community are unbelievers, they choose to let them remain such, if they will but keep silent, rather than to run the risk of a more general overthrow of Christianity by a discussion, which they might awaken for the purpose of establishing it. When they are pressed with arguments against the *truth* of Christianity, they attempt to divert the public mind to the question of its utility, as if its truth was not the first thing to be settled. Why this mean unmanly practice of subterfuge and shuffling? this refusal to meet argument? This shrinking from the responsibilities of their station? It is, as I believe, because that, like other hired troops, they have no principles which require them to put at hazard their interests. It is because their cowardice, selfishness or prejudices are too strong for their consciences and reason. It is because they are but too certain that if a free discussion of this subject be permitted, truth, operating on their own minds, or the minds of the people, will require them to abandon their calling, and surrender their consequence in society. It is, in short, because that, at the bottom of all their other opinions and feelings on this subject, there is a lurking apprehension, (I dare almost say *conviction*,) that their disgusting system is but chaff.*

* I trust the time is not far distant, when the moral courage of the more intelligent and independent portion of the community will be sufficiently aroused to expose, without reserve, the dishonest and cowardly practices of these men; when their attempts to dissuade weak and timid minds from the examination of evidence; to keep the reasons and arguments of their opponents out of sight; and to so fill the minds of their dupes with vulgar and superstitious fears and prejudices as to deprive them of all mental liberty on this subject, will receive their merited condemnation; and when the efforts, which, instead of meeting the arguments of men, they are now so zealously making, by Sabbath-schools and otherwise, to forestal the judgments and permanently rivet the faith of the *young*, by impressing and deluding their imaginations, before they are capable of reasoning, will be regarded as a nefarious artifice for perpetuating their own influence by depriving the human mind of its rights, and truth and reason of their power.

CHAPTER II.

The Nature and Character of Jesus.

Before proceeding to the examination of the alleged miracles of Jesus, it is desirable that we form an established opinion in relation to his personal nature and character; for if we suppose him a mere man, we shall be the more ready to suspect that his alleged miracles were not real: on the other hand, if we give him a super-human nature, we shall be more inclined to believe the contrary. What evidence then is there, previous to his beginnig to work miracles, that tends to shew that he was possessed of any other than a human nature?

We are told, in the first place, that he had a miraculous origin; that God (or the Holy Ghost) was his father, (Mat. i. 20—Luke i. 35), and Luke (i. 35) gives this fact as the reason *why* he was to be called the Son of God. But let us see whether this fact were so.

It is clear, on the one side, that if he had such an origin, no single human being could have had personal or absolute knowledge of the fact except his mother. Now, if we had the direct declaration of the mother that such was the truth, it would be idiocy to pretend that a fact, admitted to be contrary to the order of nature, and such as the whole world never witnessed before or since, ought to be taken as true, on the bare assertion of a single person, and of a person too, who, on the natural supposition in relation to her case, must have been under one of the strongest of all possible earthly temptations to deceive.

But we have not even *her* testimony to this point. We have only the simple declarations, made by two men (Matthew and Luke) more than forty years afterwards—men, who could not have personally known the truth of what they stated; who unquestionably never heard a syllable of the matter until thirty or forty years from the time when it was said to have occurred; who give us no account, either of the manner in which, or of the persons from whom, they obtained their information; and who differ widely in their account of the circumstances attending the transaction—Luke relating many marvellous preliminaries of which Matthew makes no mention, although they are such as *he* too would be likely to have related, if he had ever heard of them. Now he must have heard of them, if he had obtained his information of the principal fact from Mary, who was the only person that could have absolutely known that fact, if it were true.

It is evident, therefore, that each of these men took up some one of the unattested stories, floating in that superstitious, credulous, ignorant, and deluded community, forty years after the supposed transaction.

After Jesus had begun to preach, many believed him to be a super-human personage, and it is easy to see that that circumstance alone would give rise, among those simple men, to many conjectures about his origin; and every one of his followers would be desirous to believe that it was supernatural, and would, for the sake of thus believing, catch at the slightest suggestion, conjecture or circumstance, as sufficient evidence that it was so. Stories, thus originating, would at once circulate and gain currency among such a class of men as his followers were; and the marvellous character of the stories, instead of being an objection to their credibility, would only make them the more credible to the minds of those who were ready and eager to believe any thing supernatural, in relation to one, whom they considered the most marvellous personage that had ever appeared on earth.

But there is no ground for any pretence that he had a miraculous origin, unless he derived it *in the particular manner* related in the Bible; and in order to believe that he derived it in that manner, it is necessary to believe—what? Why, that *Deity* became physically a parent! (Luke i. 35). The verse is here simply referred to, without being quoted; for it is fit only to be recorded with some of the fabulous accounts of the Jupiter of the ancients.*

As to the miraculous occurrences at his birth, such as the appearances of angels in the air, &c. there is no more reason to believe that they actually took place, than there is to believe that those did, which are related to have happened at the birth of Mahomet—nor even so much (if there can be the slightest reason in the world for believing either); for those people among whom Christianity first spread, were probably even more simple and superstitious than those among whom Mahometanism first spread, and consequently such marvellous accounts, if equally untrue, would be more likely to gain currency among them than among the latter.

But the Bible itself contains the most direct proof that the accounts about his origin, and about the supernatural appearances at the time of his birth, are both untrue.

If either of these circumstances had been true, his own parents must have preserved the remembrance of it, and would forever after, have looked on him as an extraordinary being. But the story, which is told of his conduct at Jerusalem when twelve years old, would, if true, entirely prove that, up to that time, they had not so viewed him. This story (Luke ii. 48 to 50) represents his parents as being "amazed" at seeing him in the temple; and when he asked them, "wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" "they understood not the sayings which he spake to them." Now, if the accounts in relation to his birth were true, they must have forever after viewed him as the Emanuel, and must, of necessity, *have* understood what he meant by being about his father's business. So that either Luke's story of his origin and birth, or the one of his conduct at Jerusalem, must necessarily have been false; and if *either* of them be false, the Bible is not a Revelation from God. There is no room for reasonable doubt, that one story is as false as the other, and that these ignorant and simple biographers, who have related so many things, (of which these are a part,) that they could not have known to be true, even if they were true, picked them up thirty, forty or fifty years after they relate them to have happened, from among the thousand unfounded ones, that would naturally be in circulation about him.†

* Some may perhaps believe that this verse was not intended to convey such a meaning as I have attributed to it—but can such persons tell us what other definite idea can be gathered from it?

† We have evidence that there actually were in circulation after his death, and in credit among his fol-

Again. If even the story of his conduct at Jerusalem alone had been true, he must from that time have been viewed with astonishment by his family, and regarded by them as an uncommon being. If they had been, (as they probably were,) as superstitious as the ignorant part of their countrymen generally, this single incident of his conduct at Jerusalem would have made him, in their eyes, an inspired man. Yet there is not, that I am aware of, the slightest evidence that, after this time, until he began to preach, they did so look upon him. On the contrary, there is the most direct proof that his *brothers* did *not*—for when he pretended to be able to work miracles, they taunted him with his pretensions, (John 7—3, 4 and 5) by telling him, if he could do such things, to show himself to the world, and also (evidently out of contempt towards him for the course *he* had taken) that *no* man, who sought to make himself publicly known, performed his miracles in secret. This disrespect and contempt they never would have exhibited towards him, if they had ever been informed by their parents, (as they undoubtedly would have been, if the circumstances had actually happened, and that too for the very purpose of procuring him respect from them,) either of his having had a miraculous origin, of any remarkable circumstances attending his birth, or that he had ever exhibited to them any of that precocity, which he is related to have displayed at Jerusalem.

Furthermore, if God were ever to violate the order of nature, he would not be likely to do it unnecessarily—and an occurrence, such as that in which Jesus is said to have had his origin, must have been useless, on the supposition that men would act rationally in judging of its reality from the testimony of the only one, who could have had absolute knowledge of the fact.

Finally, Jesus was human in all his appearance, from his youth up; he is supposed to have laboured like a man; he lived like a man; he looked like a man; his own brothers esteemed him as nothing but a man; *he was born of a woman;* and unless God were his father, he was a man, and nothing but a man.

But Christians say there is still other evidence—separate from the miraculous—which tends to sustain the divinity of Jesus. We are told by them that the moral grandeur and importance of the object, at which he is said to have aimed in his public career, is of this kind. Now, as it is possible that a mistake exists as to the nature of this object, some inquiry in relation to it is proper.

There has always been a disagreement between the Jews and Christians, as to the real design of Jesus in attempting to gain followers in the manner he did. The Jews always contended—and they surely had the proper means of knowing—that he was only one of many, who started up nearly at the same time, and claimed to be entitled to reign over the Jewish nation as temporal, or perhaps rather as semi-temporal, semi-spiritual kings—as such kings, in short, as the one, whom the Jews, who depended specially upon the Almighty to send them rulers, expected would, about that time, be sent to them.

It had been predicted, by those, whom the Jews considered prophets, that an extraordinary king, to be called the Messiah, would be sent to that nation.

What the particular terms of all the predictions were, need not here be set forth, since it is admitted by Christians that they were such, as that the *universal* opinion, gathered from them by the Jews, to whom they were addressed, was, that this Messiah was to be at least a temporal, though perhaps also a religious, ruler.

It is admitted by Christian writers that, at and about the time of Jesus, a large number of persons appeared in Judea, who claimed to be the Messiah that had been predicted as about to come, and who went about attempting to gain adherents by pretending to work miracles, &c.*

It is further admitted by all Christians, that the Jewish nation *en masse* looked upon Jesus as having the same object in view as these other pretended Messiahs; and it is also admitted by *many* Christians, that up to the very time when Jesus was taken and crucified, even his own confidential and immediate adherents, who, if Jesus had been honest towards them, must have known his real purposes, so far looked upon him in the same light as did the Jews, and in the same also as it is supposed the followers of the other pretended Messiahs looked upon them, as to believe that he was aiming at the acquisition of the temporal government of the Jews. And yet Christians now say that it is reasonable to believe that Jesus, although he claimed to be the Messiah, aimed at an object widely different from what was universally expected of that Messiah, and at an object widely different from what, during nearly the whole of his career, his own adherents supposed him to be pursuing.

lowers, a great variety of stories about miraculous occurrences of the most ludicrous character imaginable, though hardly more ludicrous than some related in the four gospels. That evidence is furnished by those books, (now published under the title of the "Apocryphal New Testament") which were discarded as not being canonical, or at least as doubtful, by the Council of Nice, about three centuries after Christ. As they are now admitted by Christians to be false, on that admission they prove all I wish to prove by them, viz. that after the death of Jesus, there were many stories in circulation respecting him, which rested on no authority but the tongue of rumor, and we are to judge whether these narratives, which are now esteemed by Christians, canonical—considering how many years after the death of Jesus they were written—are not as likely to have been gathered in part from simple rumor, as those others.

* For a more full account of these Messiahs, see Rev. Thomas Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, Chap. 19, also Josephus, Book 2d. Chap. 13. Several of them were finally put to death. Some of them succeeded in gaining a much larger number of followers than Jesus, *in his lifetime*, ever had.

Now it is clear that these admissions of Christians, as to what were, up to the time of his crucifixion, the *ostensible* designs of Jesus, and their pretensions as to his *real* designs during the same period, can be reconciled only by supposing, that, for so long a time, at least, he knowingly cheated and deceived his best, truest, and most intimate friends. It is preposterous to say—as christians are obliged to do, in order to extricate their case from this dilemma—that these disciples were such dunces, (although that they were simple men I agree) that, for a year and a half or more, (the time he is supposed to have been with them), Jesus found it impossible to make them *understand the difference* between a being, who came to establish an universal religion, and one who came merely to govern, as a king, the little territory of Judea; because men so foolish as that supposition would make them, could never have been educated so as even to be what some of these disciples afterwards became; and because also men could hardly be so simple as to be unable to distinguish between things so widely different.

It may be true, and probably is, as John says, (18—36,) that, *after his followers had deserted him, and he found himself in the power of his enemies*, he told Pilate that "his kingdom was not of this world;" but he appears to have been himself brought to that conviction just at that time, and solely by the fact that his former supporters had abandoned his cause, for he immediately adds, "if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; *but* NOW *is my kingdom not from hence.*"

But whatever may have been his opinion of himself, or whatever may have been his own ideas of the destiny for which he supposed God had designed him, *after* he was apprehended, the evidence is abundant as to what had *previously* been his purpose.

One important part of this evidence is, that Daniel—the only one, I believe, of the supposed prophets, who mentions a Messiah by that name—had evidently described him (Chap. 9—25, 26,) as one, who was to be the temporal king of the Jews; and Jesus, imagining himself to be this Messiah, would naturally try to fulfil the prediction by making himself answer the description as well as he could. And we accordingly find that he not only continually represented himself as the Messiah, but that there is also an evident attempt, on the part of his biographers, to make it appear that he had fulfilled the predictions, which had been made concerning the Messiah.

Another piece of evidence, to the same point, is found in John, (6—15,) where it is related that the people, who followed him, wished then "to take him by force, and make him king;" a thing, that, it would naturally seem, they never would have thought of, had he not intimated to them that he was, at *some* time, to become their king.

Another fact, which shows that he expected to have become the king of the Jews, is, that he once rode from Bethany to Jerusalem in a very triumphal and kingly manner, attended by a great body of men, who were shouting in a manner clearly indicative of their belief that he was a descendant of David, and was about to take possession of the throne which David had occupied. (Mat. 21—1 to 11. Mark 11. Luke 19—28 to 44. John 12—12 to 15.) Now if he did not intend to become their king at this time, as they expected, he was fraudulently sanctioning the mistake, under which he must have known they were acting, and must have knowingly led them on in a delusion. The only supposition therefore, that is consistent with his honesty, is, that he himself expected at this time to be made king.

It appears also (John 12—14, 15) that "it had been written," that a king of Jerusalem should come to that city, "sitting on an ass's colt," and Jesus at this time took pains to have an ass's colt obtained for him to ride on, (Mat. 21—1 to 7.)

John himself acknowledges (12—16,) that even "his disciples understood not these things at the first;" that is to say, at the time when they not only saw, but *joined in*, all this pageantry, they did *not* understand that they were paying homage to one, who was to be a spiritual king; and if they did not so understand, there can be no doubt as to what kind of a person they thought they were honoring. So that Jesus, according to the express acknowledgment of his own advocate, must either have deceived this whole crowd of followers, or he expected at this time to have been made king; because the impression, that he was about to become their king, could not have become so universal, and continued so long, among this crowd, unless he had directly countenanced it. John indeed represents (12—16) that after "Jesus was glorified," (or risen, as they supposed, from the dead,) they understood exactly what these things, which at the time of their occurrence, they did not rightly understand, must have meant. But this was all an after thought, on the part of the disciples, and is therefore good for nothing to the advocate of Christianity, although it enables the unbeliever to see how it was, that the *re-appearance of Jesus after his crucifixion*, (a thing for which they could not naturally account) turned the heads of his followers, and made them see every event, which had previously taken place, in a very different light from that true and natural one, in which they had viewed it at the time of its occurrence. After *he* was "glorified," *they* "glorified" and spiritualized every thing that he had previously said or done, and, by so doing, they gave to this benighted world a Revelation fit for use.

When Jesus, in this triumphal ride, had come near to Jerusalem, (Luke 19—37 to 44) some of the Pharisees told him to "rebuke his disciples," (meaning undoubtedly, by 'his disciples,' the crowd generally who were attending him,) and they would be likely, under such circumstances, to say to him many other things, which his biographers would not choose to tell

to us. But the fact, that the Pharisees, who were among the principal men of the Jews, told him to rebuke his followers, shows that they had no idea of receiving him, and he was probably thereby convinced that he could not be made king, for he immediately falls into a lamentation for the fate of the city—*not* for the *souls* of the Jews, as he would naturally have done, had he designed to be only a spiritual redeemer—but for the fate of the city itself. He virtually says that if the Jews would have accepted him as king, their city would have been safe; but now, he says, that "its enemies shall cast a trench about it, and compass it around, and keep it in on every side, and lay it even with the ground," &c. Now this is not the language of a purely spiritual *teacher;* it is precisely such language as we might reasonably expect to hear from a man, who wished to be the ruler of a people, but who, on being rejected as such, should endeavor to alarm their fears for the fate of their city. Or it is such language as we might reasonably expect to hear from a man so deluded as to imagine that he had been appointed by God to be the deliverer of a city, but, who, on finding that he could not become its deliverer, should suppose, as a matter of course, that it would fall into the hands of its enemies and be destroyed.

The desertion of Jesus, by his followers, furnishes an argument in support of the supposition that he attempted to be king of the Jews, rather than that he was a superior being. There was a time when he had a company, estimated at about five thousand, following him, (John 6—2, 10). Yet they soon began to leave him, (John 6—66, 67) and but a handful finally remained. Now it would be nothing strange that the followers of a man, who was attempting to make himself king of the Jews, should, after a little time, desert his cause; but it would be very strange if a Son of God should either be unable to make proselytes of all who should come to hear him, or should fail to keep them after he had once made them.

When he was finally taken prisoner, the universal charge against him was, that he had claimed to be the "King of the Jews." The people scoffed at, and insulted him, on that very account. They placed a mimic crown on his head, put on him a purple robe, and jeered him with "Hail, King of the Jews." How are this unanimous opinion of him, and sentiment towards him, to be *accounted for*, otherwise than by supposing him to have attempted to make himself a king? The answer is obvious—they cannot otherwise be accounted for.

Luke says also, (23—1, 2) that men declared before Pilate, that they had "found that fellow perverting the nation, and *forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar*, saying, that he himself is Christ, a King." Yes, he even went so far as to forbid his adherents any longer to pay tribute unto Cæsar, and gave as a reason why they should not, that he himself was *a* king, (*their* king). But Christians will probably say that these men did not speak the truth. And what reason have we to believe that they did not? Did any one contradict what they stated? No —every body, at that time, acquiesced. Still, because they told a natural and probable story about Jesus Christ, instead of a marvellous and improbable one, they are not to be credited; because they made neither a God, nor a Son of God, out of "this fellow," they must be set down as "false witnesses;" because there were several, who said that they heard the same language, they must all have conspired to destroy him by false testimony; because their statements corroborate, and are corroborated by, what had already become notoriously the public belief, they must of course be untrue; because, in short, these men testified against Jesus, instead of testifying for him, they are not to be believed. This is the kind of reasoning to which Christians must resort.

Jesus once told his disciples (Luke 22—28 to 30) in substance, that as a reward for their fidelity to him through all the difficulties and opposition he had met with, he should give each of them a *kingdom*, and that they should "sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Now if he meant earthly thrones, he of course was himself to be an earthly king, for his language evidently implies that his twelve disciples were to be kings *under him*. His language is, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Observe, they were to eat and drink at his table at the same time that they were to be kings over the tribes of Israel; of course, if their *thrones* were on earth, his table must have been on earth too, and he must have been an earthly king. But the Christian will reply that these thrones were to be thrones in heaven. Well, be it so—what then is the inference? Why, that they have KINGS in heaven.

The evidence already offered ought, as it seems to me, to be decisive; but there is one additional fact, which, if it do not prove that he attempted to make himself king, does, nevertheless, put it beyond a reasonable doubt, that, up to the time when he was seized, he had had no such object in view as Christians pretend. It appears (Luke 22—36, 37, 38,) that in the evening before he was apprehended, and after Judas had left the room under circumstances, which led Jesus to suppose that he was going to prove treacherous, he directed his remaining disciples to provide themselves with *swords*, evidently in order that they might be prepared for any danger, that might ensue. And when his disciples told him' "here *are* two swords" —(an incident, which shows that after their affairs began to grow desperate, they kept swords by them) he assented to their taking them by answering "it is enough;" and it appears afterwards that the swords were accordingly taken. Now I suppose it can hardly be necessary to go into an argument, even with Christians, in order to prove that a *real* "Prince of Peace," a purely religious or moral teacher, or any Divine Being, just as he was about to

offer up his life *voluntarily* for mankind, would not be very likely to put *swords* into the hands of his followers. The single fact, that Jesus should ever authorize his followers to arm themselves with swords, brushes away, at a single sweep, all the *subsequent* conjectures and assertions of the ignorant, simple and deluded men, who followed him, that he intended only to be a moral or religious teacher. The confidence too, with which, when he was about to be seized, his disciples appealed to him with "Lord, shall we *smite* with the sword?" and the manner in which Peter rushed on and struck off an ear of one of the party, show that Jesus had given them other lessons than that of turning the other cheek also. Nor is the inference, naturally to be drawn from these facts, to be avoided, by saying that Jesus forbid the further use of the swords, after Peter had thus employed his; because it is evident that he encouraged their use until he found the numbers against him too great to be resisted with safety. These circumstances show that his command to his disciples, to desist from further violence, was a matter of policy instead of principle.

There can be no doubt as to the fact, that this party *had* swords with them at this time, for it does not rest on the testimony of Luke alone. Matthew and John, who were of the twelve, and probably were on the spot at the time, both say that a man's ear was cut off with a sword.

It is clear, therfore, from these facts, that Jesus could not have been such a personage as Christians believe him to have been; and if he was not, it is of no consequence to us what he may have been, although the evidence may leave us in no doubt in relation to it.

Taking it for granted then, that the evidence has settled the question, so far as it was necessary to be settled, in relation to his object in his public career, we come now to another matter, to which Christians refer as evidence of his divinity, viz, the alleged perfection of his personal character. This point will be examined, although somewhat of his personal character has already been developed.

Perhaps the most conspicuous defects in his personal character were, 1st, his readiness to resort to subterfuge, when challenged to work miracles, by those who doubted his miraculous power; 2d, his propensity to practice concealment; and 3d, his notorious cowardice. A few instances only of conduct, illustrative of each of these characteristics, need be referred to.

As evidence of his readiness to resort to subterfuge, when challenged to work miracles by those who doubted his miraculous power, the following cases are deemed sufficient.

On one occasion (Mark 8—11 to 13) when some of the Phariseess came to question him, and asked him to show them a sign—apparently that they might judge of the justice of his claims to be the Messiah—he pretended to his disciples that these Pharisees were a very unreasonable set of men to ask such a thing of him, and said he would give them no sign, but left them and departed.

Mark says that their object was to entrap him, or to work some mischief with him—but how did Mark know that they had any other design than their question implies? The biographers of Jesus were very good at conjecturing reasons, finding apologies, and hunting excuses for the dastardly conduct of their master.

At another time, (John 2—13 to 21) when he had been attempting to drive the Jews from the temple, and they had asked him—as they reasonably might do—what sign he could give them as evidence of his right to do so, the only sign he proposed to show them was this, that if they would destroy their beautiful temple—a thing which he knew of course they would not do—he would rebuild it in three days. Is it possible to *imagine* an evasion more mean or contemptible?

John says that Jesus, in this instance, referred to "the temple of his body." But if he did, he acted the knave outright, because he must have known that he was deceiving those whom he addressed.

Once (Luke 4—16 to 30) in his travels he came to "Nazareth, where he had been brought up," and where he was probably known. He here told the people that he was the one who had been prophesied of, but virtually acknowledged that they had a right to expect he would work miracles, for he said, "ye will surely say unto me, whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country." But, as an excuse for not working any miracles, he made use of this despicable pretence, viz: that "no prophet is accepted in his own country"—inuendo, that it would be of no avail even to work real miracles before those who knew him. It appears—putting the natural construction upon the remainder of Luke's story—that the people thereupon thrust him out of the place, dragged him to the brow of a hill, frightened him by pretending to be about to cast him headlong down it, and then let him go. And, in my judgment, he had no reason to complain of the treatment he received.

On another occasion John says (6—30) that the people put the question to him directly, "What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou *work?*" It appears, from the context, that these men had taken much pains to find him, and had come from a distance to see him; and although their question indicates an intention to be convinced by nothing less than a miracle, they, at the same time, declare their intention to believe in him, (the very thing he desired of all men,) if he would but work one plainly. In all this they asked nothing which was not entirely reasonable. They desired only that he should exhibit the credentials, which he professed to carry with him, as evidence of his authority. They, in fact, offered him just such an opportunity as a real miracle-worker would have desired. But Jesus,

instead of working a miracle, chose to talk about something else, about their motives in following him, about his being "the bread that came down from heaven," &c., and went on talking about one thing and another, that had nothing to do with the miracle which they had challenged him to work, until (John 6—60, 61, 66, and 67) the company left him in evident disgust.

I suppose Christians would say, as John says that Jesus intimated, (John 6—26) that he had already wrought miracles before them, and since they did not give him credit for them, it was not his business to go on working them. Now this apology is but a poor compliment to the character of his miracles, for it assumes that they did not convince eye-witnesses. But—leaving that consideration—how did Jesus *know* that these particular men, who had now come so far, apparently for no other reason than to ascertain whether he could work miracles, had ever before seen him work what he called miracles? Besides, their question implies that they never had seen him work a miracle, and their declaration is, at least, as good, in such a case, as his. Admitting it therefore to be true—as we must do until the contrary be unequivocally proved—that they never had seen a miracle wrought by him, he was without excuse in refusing them, and his conduct is to be accounted for, only by supposing that he could not work miracles before those who were disposed to insist upon seeing a real miracle, and not to be satisfied with one of the common kind of pretended miracles, such as great numbers of persons, at that time, were in the habit of performing.

Another defect in his character, which was to be mentioned, was his propensity to practice concealment. He again and again, when he had done something, which his biographers have called a miracle, charged those, who were with him, "to let no man *know* it." In one instance (Mark 1—40 to 44) where he is said to have cured a leper, after he had done it, "he straitly charged him, and saith unto him, see thou *say nothing* to any man."

In a case, (Mark 8—22 to 26) where it is said that he cured a blind man, "*he led the blind man out of the town*" to do it; and not satisfied with that, he told the man, when the work was done, "neither to go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town."

In the case (Mark 5—37 to 43) where he is said to have restored to life the dead daughter of Jairus, he suffered none but Peter, James, John and the father and mother of the child to go into the room with him, although others desired to go in; and when the scene was over, he even "charged" those, who had been witnesses, "that no man should know of it;" and John in his biography of Jesus, says not a word about it; and we are indebted, for such a story as we have, to those who were not eye-witnesses.

In another instance, (Mark 7—32 to 36) where he is said to have cured (after a great deal of apparently unnecessary ceremony) a man, who "was deaf and had an impediment in his speech," "he charged" those, who had been present, "that they should tell no man."

In still another case (Mat. 9—27 to 30) where it is related of him that he cured two blind men, after the work was done, "he straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it."

Is there any excuse for such conduct as this in a real miracle-worker? Was not the taunt of his brothers well applied, when they said to him, (John 7—4) in substance, that no man did his works in secret, when he was seeking to make himself publicly known, and told him, if he could work miracles, to do it before the world?

His brothers appear to have been men of some understanding—for, although they, like the rest of their countrymen, believed in miracles, yet they saw readily enough that for a pretended miracle-worker, either to avoid the scrutiny of those who doubted his miraculous power, to select the right kind of witnesses of his acts, or to be careful to have no witnesses at all, was "no way to do things."

He appears also to have been very cautious, in the early part of his career, that the public should not know that he claimed to be the Messiah. He once (Mat. 16—13 to 20. Mark 8—27 to 30. Luke 9—18 to 21) asked his disciples, "Who say the people that I am?" And when they had told him that men had different opinions about him, "He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am?" Peter then expressed his belief that he was "the Christ." Whereupon "he charged his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus, the Christ."*

Cowardice was another defect in his character, and it is made so manifest that it cannot be concealed. He repeatedly betrayed it by fleeing from his enemies, and by so doing, he must have brought himself, and his pretensions into public contempt.

When his disciples came to him, and told him that John the Baptist had been beheaded by order of Herod, (Mat. 14—12, 13) "he departed into a desert place apart;" or, in plain English, *he fled.*

John says, (10—39, 40) in speaking of another occasion, "Therefore they sought again to take him, but he *escaped* out of their hands, and went away beyond Jordan, and there he abode;" that is to say, he run away, and stayed away.

On another occasion also John says, (11—53 and 54) "Then from that day forth they took council together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews."

* Some of the expressions, employed by the writers in relating this affair, appear to have been so unreasonably "glorified," that in order to put together a story which should appear natural and unstrained throughout, I have selected the most natural expressions from each of the accounts, instead of quoting the whole of any single one.

Matthew says, (12—14, 15, 16) in still another case, "Then the Pharisees went out, and held council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence, and charged his followers that they should not make him known:" that is, he took himself off, and told his friends to let nobody know where he had gone.

John says again, (8—59) "Then took they up stones to cast at him; but Jesus *hid* himself, and went out of the temple," &c. Yes, it seems that this Son of God, in a case of emergency, could even "*hide*" himself.

But the most contemptible instance of the cowardice of Jesus is related by John, (7—1 to 10) who says of him, that "he walked in Galilee, for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him." He then adds, that the feast of Tabernacles was at hand, and that his brothers wished him, if he could work miracles, to go up to the feast and perform them openly. They also taunted him with doing his works in *secret*. But neither solicitations nor taunts could induce him to go *with them*. He attempted to excuse himself by saying that the world hated him; and said to them, "Go *ye* up to this feast, I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not yet full come." What then did this man do? This bold reformer? This pretended Messiah? This man, who afterwards (Mat. 26—53) said that he could call upon his Father, and he would give him more than twelve legions of angels to protect him? Why, he remained behind until his brothers had gone, "but (to use John's own language) when his brethren had gone up, then went he also up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in *secret*."

The man, who can read these accounts of his secresy, his cowardice, and of the miserable subterfuges to which he would resort to prevent an exposure of his incapacity to work miracles before scrutinizing eyes, and *not* feel "ashamed of Jesus" as a Master, must not only be quite content to have a master, but very indifferent in his choice of one. And be it not forgotten, that those, who, after having had their attention called to this conduct of Jesus, shall continue to advocate Christianity, must practice the effrontery of pretending that this creeping, skulking, *hiding*, fleeing fellow was acting a part appropriate to a Son of God, and exhibiting a perfect pattern of moral greatness.

Such, be it remembered, is one part of the character given to this man by his best friends. It is no "enemy that has done this." It all comes from men, who evidently did not intend to let out any thing, which would make against their cause, but who happened to be too simple always to know what it would be expedient to keep back. And we can easily judge, from the character given to this man by his friends, what an one would have been given to him by an unbelieving eye-witness, if such an one had cared enough about him to take the trouble of exposing the whole of his conduct.

Christians have the opinion that Jesus, at last, delivered himself up, magnanimously and willingly, a martyr for the benefit of mankind. Now this opinion is founded entirely upon the improbable, to the rejection of the probable, part of the contradictory testimony in relation to his conduct on that occasion. The probable part of the testimony (and there is enough of it for my purpose,) goes, directly and manifestly, to show that Jesus skulked and endeavored to escape in this instance, in the same manner he had so often done defore.

But before introducing this testimony, let us look at the absurdity of that which Christians adopt. The latter is, that at the supper, on the evening before Jesus was taken, it was *understood* between him and Judas, that the latter should *betray* him; that Judas thereupon left the room, obtained a *posse* of men, went in search of Jesus, and found him, not in the room where he had left him, but concealed in a garden; that he approached him, addressed him as a friend, and kissed him; that Jesus then addressed Judas as a friend, saying to him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" (Mat. 26—49, 50.) Now is it to be supposed that such a solemn farce of affected friendship would have been acted over between two men, if it had been previously understood with certainty, that the one would turn enemy, and deliver the other into the hands of those who would put him to death?

It is nevertheless probable that, previously to the supper, Jesus had seen reason to *suspect* the fidelity of Judas, and that, when he saw him leave the room, he apprehended that an immediate attempt was to be made by Judas to have him seized. This supposition accounts for Jesus's leaving the house, after the departure of Judas, and going as he did, in the darkness of the night, into the concealment of a garden. (John 18—1.) It is natural too, that, when Judas approached him in the garden, Jesus, seeing that escape was impossible, should return a friendly reply to the salutation of his suspected enemy, because he might have irritated one whom he feared, if he had showed any suspicion of his malicious design. But it is beyond credibility, if it had previously been explicitly understood between them, that Judas should act the enemy, that Jesus should thus seriously address him as a friend.

This particular story about Jesus's conversation with Judas at supper was probably made up or "glorified," by these apostles, out of something that had passed, as some other conversations appear to have been, for the purpose of making it appear that their "Divine Lord and Master" could not have met with any disaster, which he had not forseen, and intended to meet. Jesus's alleged predictions (which none of his disciples appear to have understood at the time they were made) that he should rise again, were probably manufactured, or "glorified" out of something or other, and in the same way, to meet the necessities of the case, or to make every thing correspond with the ideas, which they had come to entertain of Jesus, at the time they wrote.

Perhaps it will be thought strange that Judas should have *found* Jesus in the night, if there had been no previous concert between them. But John says (18—2) that Judas knew where this garden was, and knew also that Jesus often went there with his disciples. He therefore, after having procured men to go with him, probably went first to the house where he had left Jesus and his disciples at supper, and on not finding them there, suspected this garden to be the place of their concealment.

There are several items of testimony, which tend to show that Jesus intended, at this time, to escape the danger, which he apprehended to his life. One is, (Mat. 26—24) that, at the supper, he said, *in the presence of Judas*, (whom, as was before remarked, he probably *suspected* of having a design against him,) "wo unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born." What was the occasion for such a remark, unless it were intended as a menace to deter Judas from any attempt against his life?

Another is, (John 18—1) that after Judas had left the room, Jesus and his disciples left it also, (although it was a dark night, as is proved by the fact that those, who came to take him, carried lanterns and torches, (John 18—3) for the purpose of finding him,) went away, crossed a brook, and took up quarters for the night in a garden. Now can any reason be imagined why this man should leave a house, and go into a garden, in the darkness of the night, and remain there, unless it were for concealment and safety?

But there is less reason to suppose that Jesus had any other motive than that of concealment and security, in this instance, than there would be in the case of many other persons in the like circumstances; because it was a common thing for him to hide himself from his enemies: and, moreover, if he had wished, as Christians would have it, to offer up his life at this time, he would have had this special reason for remaining where Judas had left him, viz: that he might not *fail* of *being found* by those who were seeking to destroy him.

Another fact, too unequivocal and decisive to admit of argument, is, that in this crisis of his affairs, he directed his followers to provide themselves with *swords*, and assented to their taking with them the two, which they had. (Luke 22—36 and 38).

The fact also, that some of his disciples, when they saw that Jesus was likely to be taken, evinced so much readiness to *fight*, and appealed to him to know whether they should not "smite with the sword," show that they had looked forward to such an exigency, and had made up their minds to defend themselves, if it should be practicable, and that he had no idea of just then offering himself up, or of being offered up, as a sacrifice for mankind—at least, if he could prevent it.

Another item of the same kind of testimony is, that after he had come into the garden, he directed his disciples to "watch," (keep guard), while he went and prayed, (Mark 14—34). When he returned also, and found them asleep, he said unto Peter, "What, could ye not *watch* with me one hour?" (Mat. 26—40).

Still another item is, that when Jesus discovered those who had come to take him, he said to his disciples, "Rise up, let us go: Lo! he that betrayeth me is at hand." (Mark 14—42). What is this but saying, "*Let us run, we're going to be taken?*" But it was too late to escape, for Mark adds, that "*immediately*, while he yet spake, Judas and a great multitude, with swords and staves, came," and, after Judas had designated the one to be seized, "laid their hands on him, and took him."

Here is evidence enough, one would think, to satisfy any candid mind, possessed of common discernment, that Jesus, in this case, as he had so often done before, sought, in the most cowardly manner, to escape the fate that overtook him. His disciples indeed would represent him as having courted death, and perhaps, at the time when these accounts were written, the authors had brought themselves to believe, that he had actually desired to die for the benefit of mankind. But we are to judge from the facts themselves, and not from the subsequent construction put upon those facts by simple men, who, as we can easily see, may have been, "after Jesus had been glorified," and all that, in a state of perfect delusion in relation to the meaning of the whole affair.

The manner of Jesus, while upon the cross, is in strict accordance with the supposition of his being a weak spirited victim, rather than a voluntary martyr, conscious of the importance and necessity of his dying, and refutes the pretence that he died for the purpose which Christians allege; for if such were the purpose of his dying, there was more in that purpose, to one who could appreciate it, to sustain a man through the scene, than any other martyr ever had. But this man sunk under the infliction, said that God had forsaken him, and throughout, disclosed the weakness of his character.

His conduct too after his recovery from his crucifixion, if he did recover from it, corresponds well with his conduct before it. He lurks about privately. He does not, as Peter, one of his disciples, expressly acknowledges, (Acts 10—41), "show himself to all people," but to a few friends only—and to these he shews himself, as far as appears by the evidence, but a few times during forty days, and at those times "in the evening," and within closed doors, (John 20—19 and 26), or in some other private and stealthy manner.

One other trait in his character deserves an allusion. We have some little evidence that the notoriety, which he acquired among the ignorant, produced upon him somewhat of the effect which it frequently does upon vulgar minds, and none others, viz: an idea that the happiness of those, who were once their equals, is not now to be considered in comparison with

their own pleasure or convenience, and also an inflated assumption of superiority over them. He seems to have sometimes considered himself entitled, solely by the elevation of his rank above that of his followers, to servile and degrading manifestations of reverence from them, and to have been very willing to receive this kind of incense even at the expense of the "weightier matters of the law," if it but served to raise the estimation of his superiority in the minds of his followers. Look, for example, at the self-complacent assumption of dignity and importance, with which, when Mary had lavished the costly ointment on his head, he replied to the remonstrance against the foolish waste of what might have been made so valuable to the poor, (John 12—2 to 8.) He did not point out any good that was to come of the act, but silenced the objector by intimating that what had been done was only a proper manifestation of reverence towards so wonderful a being as himself; and added, in substance, that there were always so many poor, that it was of no importance to attend to their wants when he was present, and when his followers were blessed with an opportunity of appropriating their funds to demonstrations of devotion towards him. And yet this man was the author of a religion "*peculiarly adapted to the poor.*"

On another occasion (Luke 7—38,) this delightful fellow permitted even a *female* to "KISS *his* FEET,—*to wash them with her tears*—and to wipe them with the hairs of her head," and yet women are now told that the author of this elegant act of gallantry was the founder of a religion, which their *self-respect* and a proper regard for the dignity of their sex, imperiously require them to embrace.

But Christians have a saying that Jesus "went about doing good." Well, supposing he did for a year or two give his attention to "doing good"—is there any thing so remarkable in the fact that it can be accounted for only by supposing him a divine being? But how was this matter? Did he really "*go about, doing good?*" Was he "doing good" when he consented to the foolish waste of "three hundred pence worth of ointment, which might have been sold and given to the poor?" Was he "doing good," when he suffered Mary to "kiss his feet?" Was he "doing good," when he sneaked up to the feast at Jerusalem in *secret?* Was he "doing good," when he rode an ass's colt to Jerusalem, to make the people believe that he had been appointed by the Almighty to be their king? Was he "doing good," when he told his followers to arm themselves with swords? Was he "doing good," when practising the mean evasions, the subterfuges and the secresy, which have been before referred to? "Why, no, perhaps not," the Christian will probably answer, "but then he healed a great many sick folks, and cast out a great, great many devils." But it is a supposable case, and perhaps it will hereafter satisfactorily appear, that he could work only such miracles as these, (where doubtless the imaginations of men did the business,) and that he wrought such more for the purpose of gaining adherents, and thus making himself king of the Jews, than of "doing good."

But Christians will say that there is one kind of evidence, by which the divinity of Jesus is unequivocally proved, and that is furnished by his moral and religious instructions.

Now one objection to the moral and religious precepts and doctrines ascribed to Jesus—considering them as evidence of his divine nature—is, that a part of the moral ones are very silly, and a part of the religious ones are very blasphemous and absurd—as any person may see, who will take the trouble to read them with the view of seeing whether they are or not—and another objection to them is, that it is not likely that many of them were ever uttered by him.

Besides, if a man, who should set himself up in opposition to a portion of the community, in the manner Jesus did, and should attempt to lead those whom he could persuade to join him, should now and then utter a sentiment somewhat original and singular, and correct withal, it would be no more than might reasonably be expected. We generally see such things in every one, who has never had his mind moulded by intercourse with the many, and who attempts to lead the few. Such a man generally has something original and peculiar in his ideas.

One reason for believing that Jesus never uttered many of the sentiments ascribed to him, is, that a person attempting to prove himself such a Messiah as the Jews expected, and to make himself their king, would not be likely to give such instructions as are many of those ascribed to Jesus—but he *would* be likely to give such as could very easily be "glorified" into such as these are. For example, when he was addressing those, who followed him, on the subject of that combined temporal and religious government, which he pretended to be appointed by God to establish, he would naturally speak of his kingdom in terms, which could easily be "glorified" into "the kingdom of God," "the kingdom of heaven," &c. And the Evangelists, although, at the time he spoke, they understood him as referring to his kingdom among the Jews, would yet, at the time they wrote, when their ideas of the nature of his kingdom had been changed by his supposed resurrection from the dead, consider every thing, that he had previously said, as referring to a different kingdom from what they had before supposed, and would record it accordingly.

Many of his moral precepts are such too as would naturally be thrown out to his hearers by such a man as I have supposed him to be; because it would be necessary that one, who proposed to make himself such a king as the Jews expected, one who was to control both their civil and religious affairs, should give to those whom he was persuading to join him, some idea of the social regulations, and the moral and religious observances, which he intended to establish among the people.

Another reason for believing that many of the sayings, attributed to Jesus, were never uttered by him, is, that the time, when they were recorded, was so long after they are represented to have been spoken, as to forbid the belief that there is any great accuracy in them. It is preposterous, to pretend that these men should remember conversations in the manner they assume to have done.*

Still another reason is, that these narrators, at the time they wrote, had probably become more capable of being themselves the authors of whatever would seem to be above the capacity of a very simple man, (if indeed there be any such sentiments in the New Testament), than Jesus himself, for they had then had much intercourse with mankind, they had travelled extensively, and had spoken and labored much as preachers, and their talents must have been improved by such an education. And of their readiness to relate the best and the most they could either remember or *imagine* of the sayings of Jesus, having the semblance of similarity to any thing that he had ever uttered, it seems to me there can reasonably be little doubt in the mind of any man who reads their stories.

In order to show how little reliance is to be placed upon the pretended authorship of the sentiments ascribed to Jesus by the Evangelists, nothing more need be done than to exhibit the authority, on which his talk to the people on the mount has come down to us. Matthew would have us believe that he has given us the matter of a discourse, which Jesus held to his followers at this time. And yet, as I shall attempt to satisfy the reader, Matthew not only was not present when the speech was made, but was not even a disciple of Jesus at the time.

The seventh chapter of Matthew closes the speech; the eighth gives accounts of miracles, &c., the first verse of the ninth then says, that "he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city," (Nazareth.) It would appear from the remark here quoted, and from the last fourteen verses of the *fourth* chapter, that this harangue was made in Galilee, on the other side, from Nazareth, of the sea of Galilee. By the ninth verse of the ninth chapter, it appears that Matthew was found in Nazareth, and called to be a disciple, *after* Jesus had returned from Galilee. It is probable, from the fact that Matthew was found in Nazareth, that he *lived* there, and of course, at a distance from the place where the speech was made. This fact, and the fact that he was not called to be a disciple until after the speech was made, render it improbable that he was present at the delivery of the speech, or that he knew any thing about it until it was over. And yet, some ten, twenty or thirty years afterward, he pretends to give us the substance of a discourse, containing remarks upon a great variety of subjects, having no connection with each other.

Even if he had heard them uttered, it is preposterous to suppose that he could have remembered so great a variety of disconnected remarks. But when we consider that he probably did not hear them, all confidence in the correctness of his report vanishes. So that, whether we consider this production either as heard, or only as *heard of*, by Matthew, it comes to us in the shape of a thing mainly fabricated or "glorified," years afterwards.

But there is another and stronger objection to the instructions, which are attributed to Jesus, than has yet been mentioned. This objection is, that the whole system of morals and religion is based upon the selfish principle. The system throughout, is one of rewards and punishments—the most debasing, to men's motives, of all imaginable systems. In it, right and wrong are not recognized as fundamental principles of action, but are made referrible to ulterior considerations of personal pleasure and pain. Jesus never instructed men to do what was right, *because it was right;* yet this is the true reason why they *should* do it. Nor did he instruct them to avoid what was wrong, for the reason that it was wrong: yet that should be the fundamental and principal reason in every man's mind, because it is the moral reason. But the Bible, by the uniformity, with which it makes the selfish inducement, the promise of reward, or the threat of punishment, follow the moral precept, *impliedly admits* that the principal reason why we should do right, is, that we shall be rewarded for it, and the principal reason why we should not do wrong, is, that we should be punished for it. How much real honesty of principle, or how much of purely virtuous sentiment, can be infused into men's minds by means of such mercenary inducements, I leave to others to determine.

Men's moral principles are weak enough without their being made subordinate to selfishness; and their selfishness is quite active enough, without any such effort as Christianity makes to constitute it the mainspring of all their conduct. There are *natural* sentiments of justice, rectitude and virtue, in men's minds, which, *when directly appealed to* as motives to action, are generally found capable of being cultivated and strengthened, and of controlling the conduct of any of mankind. There are few, (if indeed there are any,) men, who cannot be persuaded to do what is right, by having it urged upon them that it *is* right; and there are but few men, who cannot, in any particular case whatever, be dissuaded from a wrong action, by having it urged upon them that it is wrong. Yet a great portion of the same men, who are thus easily persuaded to do what is right, by the argument that it is right, and dissuaded from doing what is wrong, by the argument that it is wrong, would consider it, and justly too, a despicable and degrading descent, to yield to, or act under, the influence of such hopes of reward, and such fears

* Both Matthew and John are supposed to have written their narratives more than thirty years after the crucifixion. See Rees' Cyclopædia.

of punishment, as the Bible and its advocates attempt to awaken. And the very men, whose trade and incessant effort it is to bring others under the control of these base and mercenary and false motives of action, would consider it an imputation upon their virtue and their characters, to insinuate that they themselves are governed by such means; and would take it in high dudgeon to have it intimated that their natural sense of right was scanty, or that it would in general be insufficient to control their conduct. But they have great fears for the virtue of their fellow men—it is entirely unsafe to trust mankind in general with no motives but such as truth would furnish—their fellow men are generally either such simpletons that they must be wheedled by prospects a thousand times too extravagant to be probable, by promises of "sweet things" hereafter, or they are such perfect monsters that they must be set upon and overawed by menace, or enslaved by fear; they are utterly incapable of appreciating any consideration of right or reason; and hence the *absolute necessity* of Christianity.

CHAPTER III.

The Alleged Miracles of Jesus.

If it has now been reasonably shown, that up to the time when he began to work miracles, Jesus had exhibited no other than a human nature; and if neither the probable object of his public career, his personal character, nor his religious and moral instructions, give any evidence of his divinity, we are to inquire as to the reality of his alleged miracles, not only without any previous assumption or bias in their favor, but with the same suspicion and incredulity that we should feel towards the pretended miracles of any other person, and with a determination to scrutinize them as closely as we would any others, and to detect their falsehood, if any falsehood can possibly be detected in them.

It has been argued that no amount of human testimony can be rational evidence of the reality of an alleged miracle; because such testimony must always be liable to this objection, viz: that experience has proved that it is more probable that any number of men would lie, or would be deluded, imposed upon, or mistaken, than that a miracle would be performed. And this objection seems to be a good one, because we do know that persons have, in cases almost innumerable, been imposed upon by pretended miracles, but we do not know that a real miracle has ever been wrought by the agency of man, or that any miraculous occurrence has ever taken place since the order of nature was established. It probably might also be maintained, that a man's own senses could not be reasonable evidence of a miracle; because men's senses have, in thousands of instances, deceived them in regard to pretended miracles; but we know certainly of no instance where they ever proved the reality of a miracle.

Nevertheless, the following attempted explanation of the alleged miracles of Jesus will not insist upon these arguments, but will proceed upon the supposition that human testimony *can* be sufficient evidence of the reality of a miracle—assuming, however, the soundness of this principle, viz: that we are not to believe a miracle on human testimony, so long as we can actually *discover* an inconclusiveness in that testimony, or can *detect* a possibility of mistake or falsehood in the witnesses. The correctness of this principle I suppose Christians themselves will not have the face to dispute.

One other principle also they must admit, viz: that the *object, for which* the alleged miracles of Jesus are said to have been wrought, can weigh nothing in favor of their reality; because, if we say that God caused them to be wrought for the purpose of proving a Revelation, we thereby *assume* that a Revelation exists—which is the very thing in dispute, and which is to be proved *by* the miracles, if proved at all, and therefore is not proved at all until the miracles are established. If we attempt to prove the Revelation by the miracles, and also the miracles by the Revelation, we reason in a circle. The alleged miracles of Jesus therefore must stand exclusively upon the *historical* evidence, which tends to sustain them, without any regard being had to the purpose for which they were wrought, if they really were wrought. And they must be supported by evidence as strong as would be necessary to prove the reality of miracles, for the working of which no reason at all could be assigned.*

But to proceed with the evidence. It is worthy of especial remark, and should be constantly borne in mind, that at the time of Jesus, a miracle was considered, among the Jews, *a very common occurrence.* Jesus acknowledges that others could perform some of the same kind of miracles, which he himself did, viz: casting out devils. "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by

* I might here safely leave the question of Jesus's miracles, without any further argument, were I so disposed; because no thinking man would for a moment believe them to have been real ones, unless he could see, or should fancy he could see, that it was important that they should be wrought for the purpose of proving a Revelation—yet, as has been shown, the purpose, for which they are said to have been wrought, cannot logically be taken at all into the account, when judging of their reality.

whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you, (Mat. 12—27 & 28. Luke 11—19 & 20.) Jesus here impliedly admits, as I understand him, that others performed deeds *similar* to some of those, which, by himself possibly, and by his disciples unquestionably, were believed to be miracles, and which he professed to perform for the purpose of proving his Messiahship. He however would make a distinction between his supposed miracles, and those of others, by pretending that his were done by the help of the spirit of God, and that those of others were wrought by the help of a different power. But the Pharisees had just been charging *him* with working by the power of Beelzebub, and how is an impartial person to judge who works by Beelzebub, (supposing there were a Beelzebub,) and who by the power of the Almighty, when both persons perform the same miracles, and each charges the other with working by Beelzebub? or how is an impartial person to know which are real miracles, and which are false, when both are apparently alike? What reason then is there for supposing that the works of Jesus were any better miracles than the works of others?

Jesus also admits (Mark 9—38, 39 and 40) that the man, whom his disciples told him they had found casting out devils on his own account, was performing *real miracles.* True, this man used the *name* of Jesus; but he did so without authority—so that the miracles must be considered as much his own, as if he had used his own name, or no name at all.

Now, if, as Jesus himself acknowledges, the miracles of others were real ones, the inference is inevitable from these facts, that the power to cast out devils was no evidence that a man was commissioned by God. But, if these performances were not *real* miracles, Jesus, like the rest of his countrymen, was so ignorant as not to know it, because he expressly acknowledges that they were real.

Again Jesus says (Mat. 24—24) that *false* Christs "*shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect.*" Now this is equivalent to acknowledging that false Christs could perform works so wonderful that it would be exceedingly *difficult* to distinguish *them* from such as he himself wrought. Indeed it is equivalent to acknowledging that an impartial observer would be as likely to believe those to be real, as to believe his to be so. But he evidently believed that there was some *supernatural* cause why the "elect" would not be deceived by them, for he says, "if it were possible" they would be. And he found it necessary, by declaring such works to be the works of false Christs, and by cautioning his disciples in the strongest manner against them, to prevent them from regarding, or giving any credit to, those works, which, to unbiassed minds, would appear equally miraculous with his own, and would furnish equally strong evidence as his, that each of the authors of them was the real Messiah instead of himself.

If the works of Jesus were so much more wonderful than man could perform as to deserve to be called miracles, was it not nonsense to caution his disciples so strongly against being deluded by the works of others?*

What the works of these pretended Messiahs (of whom it is admitted by Christians that there were about seventy, who lived about the time of Jesus), were, I know not—but it is related, on such authority as Christians admit to be true, that some of them got large sects after them. The Rev. John Newton, in his Dissertations on the Prophecies, (Chap. 19) says that one of them obtained thirty thousand followers. This number is probably many times larger than that of those, who believed in Jesus, *during his life time.* The largest estimate, which I have found of his followers at any one time, is, "about five thousand men, besides women and children," (Mat. 14—21), and this estimate is undoubtedly a great exaggeration. Besides, it would appear that of those, who sometimes followed him about in the early part of his career, nearly all soon abandoned him. If then, those, whom Jesus calls false Christs, were so much more successful than himself in gaining adherents, it is in the highest degree probable that *their* works gave evidence, to those who saw them, of greater miraculous power than his did. So that if we believe there ever was such a being as a real Messiah, we ought, judging from the testimony of the eyewitnesses, (whose testimony alone is good for any thing), on every principle of reason, as far as the evidence of miracles is concerned, to believe that Jesus was not the actual one—but that the one, who obtained, *during his life time*, the greatest number of followers, was the true one; because these followers, were the eyewitnesses whose

* Such facts as the above would furnish a complete answer to all the arguments—founded on the importance of the alleged purpose of establishing in men's minds a belief in a revelation—(supposing such arguments to be admissible), that Christians have ever urged in favor of the *probability* and *propriety* of miracles; because the very testimony (the Bible), relied on to prove that miracles were employed for *that* purpose, declares also, explicitly and unequivocally, that, at the same time, and among the same people, other miracles, equally real, and equally wonderful as far as men's senses could discover, were performed, which are not pretended to have any connexion with a revelation, or any other important design. In order, therefore, to support the Bible history of these events, there is just as strong a necessity for arguing in support of the probability and propriety of God's giving miraculous power to some individuals for no discoverable purpose at all, as in favor of his giving it to others to enable them to convince men of the truth of a revelation, because, according to the Bible, he gave it in the former case as certainly as in the latter.

If the Bible be true, it is as certain also that God gave miraculous power to a *pool of water*, as it is that he gave it to Jesus or any of his disciples, (John 5—4.)

testimony constitutes the evidence in either case, and by following a man they expressed their belief in the reality of his pretended miracles. Of course the witnesses must have been more numerous, who could testify to the reality of the miracles of others, than of those of Jesus; and we ought certainly to believe the testimony of a large number rather than the testimony of a few.

The number of those, who were *not* eyewitnesses, but who might believe on a particular one of these pretended Messiahs *after his death*, and simply upon the testimony of others, is no evidence at all that one was the real one; because there might be many circumstances, which had nothing to do with the reality of the miracles, that would nevertheless make the pretended miracles of one believed after his death, when those of another would be forgotten. For example, if the followers of one should spread the accounts of his doings, after his death, such an one would continue to be believed after his death, when another, whose disciples should neglect this step, would naturally be forgotten, although his works might be even many times the more wonderful of the two. This was the case with Jesus. He had few followers, in his life time, compared with those of others; but some of his followers circulated the story of his doings, after his death, and by that means his memory was preserved.

It appears to me that even what little has now been said, would be sufficient to satisfy men that Jesus never performed any real miracles, if they would but judge of the probabilities on this subject, as they do on any other subjects of history. But it is not with the Bible as it is with other books, in respect of being believed. There are few men, and probably no women, who believe it because it is probable, (for they do not know, nor dare they inquire, whether or not it be probable), or for any other reason that has any thing like evidence or argument in it. They believe it, almost universally, for one, or the other, or both, of these very potent reasons, viz: either simply because it *is* the Bible, or because they expect they should be damned if they were to disbelieve it, however improbable it may be—thus virtually charging their Maker with being wicked enough to torture men through eternity, for not having believed, in this world, what was improbable. That "he that believeth not shall be damned," appears to be the strongest of all arguments, in the minds of the many, in support of the Bible. It is thus that Christianity, by seizing upon men's fears, and thus making dupes and slaves of their understandings, has preserved its credit in their minds, and its power over their reason, has brought down with it, to this day, some of that credulity for the marvellous, in which it was first established, and has thus prevented men from inquiring, in a rational manner, as otherwise the enlightened portion of the world probably would have done, as to what was probable, and what improbable, in relation to the designs and government of God.

Since then a further examination of the subject of miracles is necessary, I will go into an examination of the separate evidence of each and every miracle, that Jesus is said to have performed, and of which there is any particular account in either of the four narratives of his acts and preaching. The number of these is thirty-three, and no more. Some of these are mentioned by one of the narrators, some by two, some by three, and a single one of them by the four. There are many other general and indefinite accounts of his miracles, such as that, in particular places, he "cured all manner of diseases," or that "he healed all, who were vexed with unclean spirits," or "those who were tormented with plagues," &c. But since many of these thirty-three were recorded by Matthew thirty years afterwards*—and as many of the same were recorded many years afterward by Mark, who was a follower of Peter, and probably knew nothing of Jesus personally,† and by Luke also, who was a citizen of Antioch, converted by Paul, and who of course never had any personal knowledge of Jesus,‡ there can be no doubt that these were considered the most remarkable that he was ever supposed to perform; otherwise they would not have been remembered and circulated so as to be the most remarkable ones that should come to the knowledge of each of these three different persons.

Many of these supposed miracles will be attempted to be accounted for, by showing them to have been the work of the imagination. Such ones will be examined first, and the others afterward.

The influence of the imagination upon sick persons is known to be very great, and in many cases of modern date, it has been observed and recorded by physicians to have been surprising. There are perhaps few adults, who have ever attended a sick person, that have not observed the sensible and sudden effect of a newly excited hope upon him. All know the importance of sustaining the hopes of a sick man. The reason of this, is, that his nervous system is then, vastly more than in health, susceptible to the influence of particular states of the mind. It is one of the most common observations, in relation to a person dangerously ill, that "if his courage be maintained, and he *think* he shall recover, he *will* recover, but if he *think* he shall die, he certainly will die." The frequent expression of such opinions shows that we are all aware of the influence of the imagination upon the sick, although the philosophy of its operation is perhaps not known to all who know the fact.

There is perhaps no man, even at the present day, who, when sick, although he perfectly well understood every thing about the power of the imagination, is not nevertheless in a very

* See Lempriere's Biographical Dictionary.

† See Newton on the Prophecies Chap. 18.

‡ See Lempriere's Biographical Dictionary, also Newton on the Prophecies, Chap. 18.

great degree under its influence. Physicians understand this principle in physiology, and many of them avail themselves of it, by holding out encouragement whenever they can do it without running too great a risk of occasioning an injurious effect by a disappointment of the expectations thus raised. It requires very little of the excitement of hope to string the nerves of a sick man, because they are exceedingly susceptible. Thus many physicians will often give to a sick man medicines, which are simple and powerless of themselves, merely for the sake of the beneficial influence, to be derived from his *imagining* that he has taken something which is benefitting him.

We all know, too, how little excitement of the feelings, upon a man, who is sick, and apparently destitute of all strength, will occasion insanity, and cause him to exhibit wonderful power. Now he really has no more strength in his muscles, during his insanity, than he had before; but his nervous system has been excited by the operations of his mind, and his latent strength thus called out. It is by the operation of the same principle, that other excitements of the feelings, as a newly inspired expectation of recovery for example, often calls out the latent strength of a sick man to a considerable degree, without making him insane, unless a man may be always properly called insane in just so far as his imagination deceives him.

Further evidence of the power of the imagination to operate upon the sick, and to cure diseases, is furnished by the following extracts, taken from Rees's Cyclopædia—article, Imagination.

"In the year 1798, an American, of the name of Perkins, introduced into this country "(England) a method of curing diseases, for which he obtained the royal letters patent, by "means of two small pieces of metal denominated *Tractors.* These were applied external-"ly near the part diseased, and moved about, gently touching the surface only; and thus mul-"titudes of painful disorders were removed, some most speedily, and some after repeated ap-"plications of the metallic points. Pamphlets were published, announcing the wonderful "cures accomplished by this simple remedy; and periodical journals and newspapers teemed "with evidence of the curative powers of the *tractors;* insomuch that in a few months they "were the subject of general conversation, and scarcely less general use. The religious sect "of the Quakers, whose benevolence has been sometimes displayed at the expense of their "sagacity, became the avowed and active friends of the *tractors;* and a public establishment, "called the "Perkinean Institution," was formed under their auspices, for the purpose of "curing the diseases of the poor, without the expense of drugs or medical advice. The trans-"actions of this institution were published in pamphlets, in support of the extraordinary effi-"cacy of these new instruments. In somewhat less than six years Perkins left the country, "in possession, as we have been informed on good authority, of upwards of ten thousand "pounds, the contributions of British credulity; and now (1811) the tractors are almost for-"gotten.

"We by no means intend to impeach the veracity, of those, who attested the many extra-"ordinary cures performed by the application of the *tractors;* on the contrary, we have no "doubt that many of them were actually accomplished, at least temporarily: after what we "have already stated, when treating of *animal magnetism* (such as the sudden cure of the ar-"tist's head-ache, on the bridge, by M. Sigault's gestures), and what we shall proceed to state "respecting the effects of *counterfeit* tractors, it were impossible not to admit the truth and "correctness of the majority of the accounts of the efficacy of *Perkinism.* We must observe, "however, that the efficacy was founded on the delusion; and had not the scientific world been "at that time in a state of comparative ignorance respecting the principle of which Galvani "had recently obtained a glance; had they been in total ignorance of that principle, or pos-"sessed of more than that "little knowledge" of it, which "is a dangerous thing," such an "imposture would scarcely have gained ground for a day, among those who were acquainted "with the proceedings of the French Commissioners in the affair of Mesmer.* But Perkins "associated the idea of the Galvanic principle, or animal electricity, with the operation of "his tractors, by constructing them of two different metals, which the Italian philosopher had "shown to be necessary to excite the operation of the agent, which he had discovered: and "the obscurity, which hung over this subject, left a new field for hypothesis, and the anoma-"lous character of the facts contributed to induce even philosophers to listen to the rela-"tion.

"But Dr. Haygarth, to whom his profession and his country are deeply indebted for more "important services, suspected the true source of the phenomena produced by the tractors, "from the first promulgation of the subject. Recollecting the developement of the animal "magnetism, he suggested to Dr. Falconer, about the end of the year 1798, when the tractors "had already obtained a high reputation at Bath, even among persons of rank and under-"standing, that the nature of the operation of the tractors might be correctly ascertained by a "pair of *false tractors,* resembling the real ones: and it was resolved to put the matter to the "test of experiment in the general hospital of that city. They therefore contrived two *wood-"en tractors,* of nearly the same shape as the metallic, and painted to resemble them in col-"or. Five cases were chosen of chronic rheumatism, in the ancle, knee, wrist and hip: one "of the patients had also gouty pains. All the affected joints, except the last, were swelled, "and all of them had been ill for several months.

* The pretended discoverer of animal magnetism.

"On the 7th, of January, 1799, the *wooden* tractors were employed. All the five patients, "except one, assured us that their pain was relieved; and three much benefitted by the first "application of this remedy. One felt his knee warmer, and he could walk much better, as "he showed us with great satisfaction. One was easier for nine hours, and till he went to "bed, when the pain returned. One had a tingling sensation for two hours. The wooden "tractors were drawn over the skin so as to touch it in the *slightest* manner. Such is the "wonderful force of the imagination.

"Next day, January 8th, the true metallic tractors of Perkins were employed exactly in "like manner, and with similar effects. All the patients were in some measure, but not more "relieved by the second application, except one, who received no benefit from the former "operation, and who was not a proper subject for the experiment, having no existing pain, "but only stiffness in her ancle. They felt, (as they fancied) warmth, but in no greater de-"degree than on the former day." Of the imagination as a cause, and as a cure of the disor-"ders of the body, exemplified by fictitious tractors and epidemical convulsions. By John "Haygarth, M. D. F. R. S. &c. Bath, 1800.

"Such were the experiments attempted with the view of ascertaining the nature of *Perkin-"ism.* But Dr. Haygarth's pamphlet contained an account of still more decisive trials made "in the Bristol infirmary, by Mr. Smith, one of the surgeons to that establishment. This "gentleman first operated with two *leaden* tractors, on Tuesday, April 19th, on a patient, "who had been some time in the Infirmary, "with a rheumatic affection of the shoulder, "which rendered his arm perfectly useless." In the course of six minutes no other effect fol-"lowed the application of these pieces of *lead* than a warmth upon the skin: nevertheless "the patient informed Mr. Smith, on the following day, that "he had received so much bene-"fit, that it had enabled him to lift his hand from his knee, which he had in vain several times "attempted on the Monday evening, as the whole ward witnessed." But although it was "thus proved that the patent tractors possessed no specific powers independent of simple "metals, he thought it advisable to lay aside metallic points, lest the proofs might be deemed "less complete. Two pieces of wood, properly shaped and painted, were next made use of; "and in order to add solemnity to the farce, Mr. Barton held in his hand a stop watch, whilst "Mr. Lax minuted the effects produced. In four minutes the man raised his hand several "inches, and he had lost also the pain in his shoulder, usually experienced when attempting "to lift any thing. He continued to undergo the operation daily, and with progressive good "effect, for on the 25th, he could touch the mantle-piece.

"On the 27th," Mr. Smith continues, "in the presence of Dr. Lovell and Mr. J. P. Noble, "two common iron nails, disguised with sealing wax, were substituted for the pieces of ma-"hogany before used. In three minutes the same patient "felt something moving from his "arm to his hand, and soon after he touched the Board of Rules, which hung a foot above "the fire place. This patient at length so far recovered, that he could carry coals, &c. and "use his arm sufficiently to assist the nurse: yet previous to the use of the spurious tractors, "" he could no more lift his hand from his knee than if a hundred weight were upon it, or a "nail driven through it," as he declared in the presence of several gentlemen. The fame of "this case brought applications in abundance, indeed it must be confessed, that it was more "than sufficient to act upon weak minds, and induce a belief that these pieces of wood and "iron were endowed with peculiar virtues." See Dr. Haygarth's Pamphlet, p. 8.

"Many other equally striking instances of the curative operation of the imagination, when "excited by the sham tractors, might be quoted from the pamphlet in question. * * * * *

"After having perused this abundant evidence of the powers of the imagination, not only "in producing various affections of the body, but in removing others which exist, we can have "no difficulty in crediting many relations of cures performed by persons supposed to be gifted "with extraordinary powers, or employing other pretended agents, all of which may be refer-"red to the same common principle. One of the most singular instances of this kind, both "from the number of cures performed, and the rank, learning and character of the persons, "who attested them, is to be found in the person of Valentine Greatraks, who flourished in "the latter part of the 17th century.

"The proceedings of this pious and apparently sincere man are very interesting, as afford-"ing a history of the power of imagination and confidence over certain disorders of the body. "He was the son of an Irish gentleman of good education and property, who died in his "childhood. Disgusted with the religious and political contentions of his country in the time "of Cromwell, he retired from the world, apparently in a state of melancholy derangement "and bad health, which had nearly terminated fatally. On recovering, he became one of "the puritans of the day, and after having acted sometime as a magistrate, he had "an im-"pulse of strange persuasion" in his mind, which continued to present itself, whether he was "in public or in private, sleeping or waking, "that God had given him the blessing "of curing the king's evil." Accordingly he commenced the practice of touching for this "disease about the year 1662, which he continued for three years; at this time the ague be-"came very epidemical, and the same impulse within him suggested "that there was bestow-"ed upon him the gift of curing the ague," which he also practised with success, by laying "his hands on the patients. At length he found his power extended to epilepsy and paralytic "disorders, &c.; but he candidly acknowledges that many were not cured by his touch.

"Nevertheless the unbounded confidence in his powers, and consequently the facility with "which the imaginations of the ignorant would be acted upon, must be manifest from the fol- "lowing statement, which he sent to Mr Boyle. "Great multitudes from divers places re- "sorted to me, so that I could have no time to follow my own occasions, nor enjoy the company "of my family and friends; whereupon I set three days in the week apart (from six in the "morning till six at night,) to lay my hands on all that came, and so continued for some "months at home. But the multitudes which came daily were so great, that the neighboring "towns were not able to accommodate them; whereon, for the good of others, I left my "home, and went to Youghall, where great multitudes resorted to me, not only of the in- "habitants, but also out of England; so that the magistrates of the town told me, that they "were afraid that some of the sick people that came out of England might bring the infec- "tion into the place: whereon I retired again to my house at Affane, where (as at Youg- "hall,) I observed three days, by laying my hands on all that came, whatsoever the diseases "were (and many were cured, and many were not;) so that my stable, barn and malt house "were filled with sick people of all diseases almost, &c."

"We shall not extend this article by quoting the histories of cases certified by several phy- "sicians, as well as by divines and philosophers; among whom were the names of Robert "Boyle, Dr Cudworth, Dr. Whichcot, &c. We may remark, that some of the cases of "headache and rheumatism resemble most accurately those which were cured by the spuri- "ous tractors abovementioned; and that the hand of Greatraks can only be conceived to have "operated in the same way. The influence of the imagination was likewise obvious in sev- "eral convulsive affections, in the same manner as in the woman at Passy, who fell into the "*crisis* before the magnetism was applied. Greatraks mentions several poor people that "went from England to him, "and amongst the rest, two that had the falling sickness, who "*no sooner saw me, than they fell into their fits immediately;*" and he restored them, he af- "firms, by putting his hands upon them. Nay, he tells us, that even the touch of his *glove* "had driven many kinds of pains away, and removed strange fits in women; and that the "stroking of his hand or his glove had, in his opinion, and that of other persons present, "driven several devils, or evil spirits, out of a woman, one after the other, "every one hav- "ing been like to choke her (when it came up to her throat,)before it went forth." Now this "whole description contains a pretty accurate picture of an ordinary hysterical fit, with its "attendant *globus*, terminating with the discharge of flatus.

"About the same period, a Capauchin friar, whose name was Francisco Bagnon, was fa- "mous in Italy for the same gift of healing, by the touch of the hands only; and was attended "wherever he went by great multitudes of sick people, upon whom he operated numerous "and surprising cures, which were deemed true miracles. So general was the belief in "his curative powers, that even a prince of Parma, who had labored under a febrile disease "for the space of six months, was induced to apply to him, and was immediately cured by his "voice only. The prince himself, and many others that were present, afterwards bore pub- "lic testimony to the fact." * * * * * * * *

"But it is unnecessary to enumerate the individuals, the De Mainaducs, the Prescotts, &c. "who have at various times been distinguished by the possession of various occult methods "of healing the sick. The practice has occasionally prevailed in almost all ages; and we "have seen, in the details of experiments above related, that the faculty of the imagination, "in certain habits and conditions of the body, and especially in the irritable female constitu- "tion, is actually capable of producing all those effects on the corporeal frame, which have "been deemed the result of occult agency and extraordinary powers."

"Admitting this, then, as an established principle of the human constitution, and making "due allowances for the exaggerations and misrepresentations of ignorance and superstition, "we are enabled to give a rational explanation of many historical relations, which have been "considered as altogether fabulous, or as direct violations of truth. We are well aware of "the facility with which the imagination is excited in an uninformed person, and more par- "ticularly in an age of profound ignorance, which is, for that reason, commonly an age of "superstition. We know, too, that in the middle ages, when every form of science was al- "most unknown, and the laws of nature had not been investigated, the smallest discovery in "natural philosophy, chemistry, or astronomy, was deemed the result of supernatural com- "munication with the world of spirits; and the discoverer or possessor of the knowledge was "looked upon as a being gifted with supernatural powers. In such a state of the human "mind, when natural philosophy, meagre as it was, was disguised with the name, and clothed "with all the supposed agencies of *magic;* and when every person, with a little more knowl- "edge than his neighbors, was master of so many *magnets*, so many *tractors*, by which he "could rule the imaginations of the multitude; it cannot be the subject of our wonder, that "the magician's rod (or the philosopher's cane) should produce such mighty operations, or "that a scrap of his writing should be a remedy for many maladies. These only executed "what was afterwards performed by M. Deslon's extended fingers, and Valentine Greatrak's "glove! The effects, then, of the *incantations*, *amulets*, and all the arts of magic, witch- "craft and astrology, by which the more artful pretenders to superior knowledge imposed "upon the people, may be allowed to have actually occurred, and to have been the resul of

"natural causes; and they are plainly referrible to one common source, with those of animal "magnetism, Perkinism, and various other modifications of the imagination in fetters.

"It is scarcely necessary to add, that during the same periods of ignorance and superstition, those extremely pious and comparatively learned persons, who have been enrolled in "the catalogue of saints, must necessarily have obtained the most complete veneration and "confidence from the multitude; and hence, after their death, every relic of their bodies or "clothing, the shrines in which they were entombed, fragments of the instruments of their "execution (in cases of martyrdom.) and every other object that could excite, by association, "those reverential feelings, usually called up by a contemplation of their characters, would "become so many agents upon the imaginations, by which all the extraordinary changes in "the animal economy above described, might be effectually produced. Thus we cannot "doubt that there is much foundation for the histories of recovery from various diseases, occasioned by removing the sick to the tombs of celebrated worthies, or placing them before "the statues and images of these persons, or by touching them with nails taken from the "coffins, or rings from the fingers, or the bones of the fingers themselves of these saints, or "by the influence of an infinity of relics of this sort, which cannot be supposed to possess "less power over a superstitious mind, than the painted *tractors* of a surgeon, or the glove of "an enthusiast."

In the New Edinburgh Encyclopædia, (Am. Ed.) in the article on Animal Magnetism, we find the following, among other testimony to the power of the imagination in curing diseases.

The pamphlet of Dr. Haygarth, on the metallic tractors, "amply confirms the general principle, that the power of the imagination in the cure of diseases is almost without limits; so "that, except a complete and sudden alteration of physical structure, or the restoration of "lost parts, there is scarcely any change so considerable, which may not be effected through "its intervention. It not only possesses an indefinite power over what are styled nervous "diseases, where the primary affection consists, as far as we can judge, in some change in "the action of the brain and its appendages; but even diseases of the sanguiferous system, "and of the different organic functions, appear to be by no means exempted from its influence."

* * * * * *

"In proof of his hypothesis, and of the power of magnetism over the human body, Mesmer" (the pretended discoverer of animal magnetism,) "and his adherents confidently appealed to their success in the cure of diseases; and so great did this appear, and so unquestionable was the evidence, on which it seemed to be founded, that, for some time, scarcely any opposition was made to it, and it was regarded as the most unreasonable scepticism "to doubt of its reality."

And yet after this method of curing diseases had had this astonishing success, and had obtained this astonishing reputation, it was completely ascertained, by experiments made upon persons blindfolded, and upon those who doubted the system, (whose imaginations of course would not be so easily affected), that the previous cures had all been but the work of the imagination. These experiments were conducted by nine Commissioners, men of learning and science, appointed by the French King in 1784 to investigate the matter. Of this board of Commissioners, Dr Franklin, then American Minister at Paris, was one.

Many other cases, of wonderful cures wrought by the imagination, are cited in the article in Rees' Cyclopædia, from which a part of the foregoing extracts are taken. But enough have been quoted to establish, beyond cavil, I trust, that the imagination is capable of exerting a sudden and very exciting power over the nervous system, and of thus producing, what, by the ignorant and superstitious, would be considered *miraculous* effects in the restoration of the sick.

Now there probably have seldom, if ever, been causes in existence calculated to operate so strongly upon the imagination of a sick man, without making him actually insane, as were those which must have operated upon such as, for the time, thought themselves cured by Jesus; and perhaps the world never furnished a people more easily to be operated upon by the method and pretensions of Jesus, than were those among whom he preached. They were simple and superstitious to a degree hardly to be conceived of by us, as is proved by the fact of their running all agog after so many of those pretended miracle-workers, that infested Judea at that time.

The nation of the Jews at large, believed themselves the peculiar favorites of God; they believed that God often sent messengers to them, and in order to prove such to be his messengers, gave them miraculous powers. About the time of Jesus they expected a remarkable one to be called the Messiah. They supposed he would possess these powers in an unusual degree. Those, who followed Jesus, and supposed themselves benefitted by him, believed him to be this Messiah. It was evidently necessary, in order to be benefitted by his power, that they should believe, *in advance*, that he possessed it, as appears from Matthew 13—58, "and he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." At another time, (Mat. 9—28 and 29,) when two blind men wished to be cured, he asked them, "Believe ye that I am *able* to do this? They said "yea, Lord." Then says he, "according to your faith, be it unto you." The same inference is fairly deducible from numerous other passages and circumstances.

Keeping these facts in our minds, let us look at the cure of the palsy, as described by Matthew, (9—2 to 8,) Mark (2—1 to 12,) and Luke (5—17 to 26)—by Luke the most minutely.

Imagine Jesus surrounded by a multitude, who came to him from every quarter, who believed him to be the Messiah, and to have miraculous power; imagine him to have been going from place to place, preaching as if by the authority of God—the report going before him that he cured all manner of diseases wherever he went; imagine so great a crowd about him that the man sick of the palsy could not be carried in at the door of the house, and that it was necessary to uncover the roof to let him down where Jesus was; imagine this palsied man having full faith, from the moment he heard of Jesus, in his ability to cure him; imagine him carried on a bed by four, to the place where Jesus was, full of the highest expectations; imagine him waiting, and witnessing the crowd around full of the same extravagant expectations with himself, witnessing also the preparations being made to let him down through the roof of the house, to bring him into the presence of the wonderful being who was to restore him at a word—(during such a scene, if he had a spark of nervous vitality in him, it must have been set most powerfully at work;) imagine him at length, laid in the presence of this messenger from God, this Messiah; imagine Jesus pardoning his sins with the assumed authority of God; imagine him telling the bystanders, *in the hearing of the sick man*, that he could cause him to rise up and walk as easily as forgive his sins; (certainly, at this time, the man's nervous system must have been wrought to an extraordinary degree of excitement, if he had life in him)—then hear Jesus pronounce, in his oracular and confident manner, "That ye may *know* that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say unto thee, *arise*; and take up thy couch, and go thy way into thy house;" and is there any thing strange in the fact that he should receive strength, should rise up and walk? or that he should take with him his bed (such a sack of straw as it probably was, judging from the circumstance of its being let down through the roof of the house)? To my mind there is nothing in all this, which cannot be accounted for on the well known principles of physiology, even supposing the restoration to have been a permanent one. Here are plain and obvious causes, sufficient to produce the effect, without any supernatural agency whatever. *

If these views are correct, here was no miracle at all, even supposing the man really to have had the palsy. But suppose (a thing to my mind exceedingly probable) that this man only *imagined* himself to have the palsy—or that he had some slight infirmity, which he, knowing nothing of diseases, as the ignorant and simple people of that age and nation probably did, brought himself to believe to be the palsy;—and what sort of a miracle do we have here to prove that Jesus possessed supernatural powers? I say it is probable that the disease was not a real palsy, because ignorant, superstitious and timid men, such as were those among whom Jesus preached, *generally* magnify a slight infirmity into a grievous disease, particularly if there is any person going about the country pretending to cure diseases in a wonderful manner. Persons, who live within the circuit of such a man's travels, generally have diseases more malignant, and more in number, than the rest of the human family.

Besides, Luke, after relating the fact of Jesus's being where he was, of there being a great assemblage, &c., says, that a man was brought, who "*was taken* with *a* palsy." This language naturally conveys the idea that the man was taken *just at that time*, and if so, there are a thousand chances against one that these simple men, who would make something marvellous out of every circumstance that could, by the aid of an enormous gullibility, be made so; who probably knew no more about diseases than they did about astronomy, and who would be imposed on by any numbness of a limb, or cramp of a muscle, were *mistaken* about the character of the attack, rather than that it should be the real palsy; because that is an illness, that very rarely occurs. The patient himself too, would be as likely to be mistaken as the bystanders, and if he *thought* he had the palsy, (and if such a suggestion had been made, he would be very likely to think so,) and that Jesus would take the trouble to display his miraculous power upon him, he would most surely keep up the appearance of a palsied man as well as he could.

Further, if the bare conversation, of those around, *about Jesus performing strange cures*, should make a simple man imagine he had some disease which needed curing, when he had no real illness or difficulty at all, it would be no very remarkable instance of the power of the imagination.

Reader, decide upon this testimony before you go farther. Is there, or is there not, here, unequivocal evidence that a genuine miracle was performed? Decide upon this case separately, and independently of all others. Each alleged miracle must stand solely upon its own evidence; for even if Jesus performed any real miracles, there is no doubt the country would be full of stories about miracles which were not real, and therefore we are not to believe there was a real miracle in any particular case, if there be a *discoverable* inconclusiveness in the evidence relating exclusively to that case. I will answer for the reader, that there is not room for even a decent pretence that here was a miracle.

* In further support of the reasonableness of this explanation, I quote the authority of Dr. Combe, who says, in his work on Physiology, that "so powerful, indeed, is the nervous stimulus, that examples have occurred of strong mental emotions having instantaneously given life and vigor to paralytic limbs." This extract may be found in No. 71, Harpers' Family Library, page 112.

The second supposed miracle of Jesus, that will be examined, is related by Matthew, (8—14 and 15,) Mark (1—30 and 31,) and Luke (4—38 and 39.) It is the cure of Peter's wife's mother. The stories here leave quite too wide a latitude for doubt as to the reality and severity of the disease; for these simple beings probably did not know a fever from any other trivial complaint. Luke indeed says it was "a *great* fever." But Luke was not there, and possibly before the story reached his ears, several years afterwards, the truth might have been a little exaggerated. This too is precisely such language as one would use, who wished to make it appear that a miracle was actually wrought, when the supposed miracle was of such a sort, that, unless there were some qualifying word, as "great," in this instance, inserted, those, who should read the account, would see at once that there was doubtless no miracle at all.

But, independently of the word "great," Luke's whole account goes to show that this fever was all imaginary, and brought on (as diseases sometimes are now) by the vicinity of a physician, who was thought able to cure any thing. He says that Jesus "entered into Simon's house," and immediately he adds, "that Simon's wife's mother *was taken* with a great fever." It would appear from this account that she was taken *after* Jesus had entered the house. If she were thus suddenly taken and thus suddenly cured, both the sickness and the cure were undoubtedly the work ofthe imagination.

But supposing the affair not to have been quite so farcical as it probably was, and supposing that when Jesus entered the house, she thought herself somewhat ill, and lay on the bed, and that when he "stood over her and rebuked the fever," pretending to have miraculous power, she felt able to rise and do what she is said to have done, still here is no evidence fit to be thought of to prove a miracle. From the greatness of the number of sick, whom Jesus is said to have cured, it is evident that the diseases were either trivial or entirely imaginary; and this was undoubtedly a case of the common kind, and one that could have been cured as well by the sight of Paul's handkerchief, or by the shadow of Peter, as those that were thus cured. (Acts 19—12—and 5—15 and 16.)

The third case to be examined is that of the woman, who had "an issue of blood," (menorrhagia undoubtedly.) It is related by Matthew (9—20 to 22,) Mark (5—25 to 34,) and Luke (8—43 to 48.) This case affords an excellent illustration of the manner in which miracles were wrought upon the sick. This woman not only believed that Jesus had miraculous power to cure diseases, but she even believed that a miracle would be wrought upon her simply by her touching his garment, without his knowledge, and, of course, without *his* power being exerted. And so the event proved, if Mark and Luke are to be believed. It was the simple touching of his garment, as they say, that healed her. Mark says that "straightway" after touching, "she felt in her body that she was made whole of that plague," and also, that after Jesus had made the sagacious discovery that "virtue had gone out of him," and inquired who touched him, the woman "knowing what was" (already) "*done in her*," came forward and told him the truth. He then told her that her "*faith*" had (already) made her whole.

Luke also says that the issue of blood staunched *immediately* upon her *touching* his garment. Then he goes on to relate, that Jesus made the inquiry, who had touched him, and that the woman then declared to him, before them all, that *she* had touched him, and "how she was" (*had been*) "healed immediately." There is no room to quibble upon this language. Either his garments possessed miraculous power, or it was her imagination that healed her, or she was not healed at all—for though an Evangelist say it, and though Jesus himself may have said it, (which is not very likely,) no reasonable being can believe that he was filled with a sort of miraculous "virtue," which, when a person touched his garment, passed out of *him*, as electricity passes out of a cylinder, and that he would feel it leave him, as he is represented to have done, and that too when he did not know beforehand that any person was going to touch his garment.

But—to throw this disgusting nonsense about his "virtue" out of the question—there is a rational and obvious explanation of this matter. It is this. Her faith, in the efficacy of simply touching his garment, was so strong, that when she had touched it, she immediately did imagine, or did "feel in her body," that she was healed, and told the bystanders so. They took her word that it was really so, without ever troubling themselves afterward to ascertain whether she were permanently healed. There were too many of these cures going on before their eyes for them to inquire a second time in relation to one, which they supposed had once been well performed. From the moment of the supposed cure, the story would circulate, and these narrators afterwards recorded it as it came to them—having probably never heard of the condition of the woman after the time of the transaction; yet not doubting that there were both a permanent cure and a miracle.

The fourth case, which will be examined, is that of the man, who was said to have a withered hand. It is related by Matthew (12—10 to 13,) Mark (3—1 to 6,) and Luke (6—6 to 11.) Independent of the improbability that a miracle was ever wrought on earth, there are two palpable ones against the truth of this story. One is, that a withered limb is met with so rarely, that the chances are as an hundred to one, that those ignorant persons would call a limb withered, when it only had some slight affection, rather than that it should be in reality withered. Another improbability of the change, in the man's power to use his hand, being so great as to afford any evidence of miraculous power, arises from the circumstance, that of

the Scribes and Pharisees, who were among the most enlightened part of the community, and of course the least likely to be imposed on, in any case of an attempted or pretended miracle, there were some present, and they, when they saw the act which others supposed to be a miracle, were enraged at Jesus for what he had done. The narrators of this event attribute their anger to the fact that this act was done on the Sabbath day. But it is most manifestly absurd to suppose that men, such as they undoubtedly were, could look on and see a man's hand, that was actually withered, restored and made whole by a word, and then have the hardihood to attempt violence, or plot mischief against the being who had done it. *Men* are not such monsters. But if the fact was, as all the probability of the case goes to show it to have been, viz, that in consequence of some slight infirmity, this simple man imagined his hand to be withered, and had not used it as usual, but, when commanded by Jesus, in whose miraculous power he had confidence, to stretch it forth, he used a little more effort than he was accustomed to, and stetched it out, and then, that many of the more ignorant ones, such as his disciples, should say a miracle had been wrought, it is perfectly natural that the Scribes and Pharisees should be enraged at seeing men thus duped by a fanatic and mere pretender.

Jesus made few or no converts among the enlightened part of the very nation that he pretended to be sent more especially to convert. Instead of working his miracles freely before such that *they* might be convinced, he, when in another instance, they had asked him to show them a sign—apparently for the express purpose of enabling them to determine whether he were the Messiah—called them (probably not to their face however) a wicked and adulterous generation for seeking a sign, by which they might ascertain that fact, (Mat. 16—4.) He was also continually fomenting the most narrow, illiberal and spiteful prejudices against them, in the minds of his ignorant followers. Such conduct, on his part, can be accounted for only by the fact, that when they saw, with their own eyes, those acts, which he called miracles, they, instead of being satisfied that he was the Messiah, were satisfied that he was an impostor.

The Bible represents the Jews as having been a people, upon whom God had bestowed peculiar privileges, with a view of making them the depositaries of the true religion, and of preparing them for the reception of the Messiah. Now if these representations in the Bible were true, and if Jesus were the Messiah, whom God had been preparing the minds of the Jews to receive, it is absolutely absurd to suppose that they would not have been the very first to have been convinced—and the fact, that they were not convinced, can be accounted for only by supposing, either that God was defeated and disappointed in his attempts to prepare them to receive the Messiah, or that Jesus was not the Messiah.

But to return. After Jesus had performed this supposed miracle, "he withdrew himself from thence," (evidently through *fear* of the Jews,) "and charged" the people that had followed him, "that they should not make him known," (Mat. 12—14 to 16.) Very dignified conduct, indeed, for a Son of God, or a Saviour of the world, and one too who could work miracles! But such was *his* course continually; and such cowardice reveals the character of the man, and shows us how much credit is due to his pretensions. If he had really been what he claimed to be, or had had any thing like moral courage, he would have better sustained the character he had assumed, and would have scorned that practice of skulking, which he so often adopted—another still more contemptible instance of which, related by John (7—1 to 10,) has been before referred to.

The fifth case, that related by John (5—2 to 9) only, of the "impotent man" at the pool of Bethesda, was probably like the last. The man, as simple ones generally, and others sometimes, do, probably magnified his infirmity, in his imagination, to a degree beyond the reality, and when he was commanded to rise and walk, he made more effort, and walked better, than usually, and that was a miracle.

The man evidently had full faith that he should be restored by being put into the pool, as is shown by the fact of his being at the pool for that purpose; and if he had been put in precisely at the time when he supposed the angel had troubled the waters, he would probably have been restored in the same manner that others were. But if he had been put in at any other time, he would have received no benefit—and for the very good reason, that he would not have expected to receive any.

The facts that a "*great multitude* of impotent folk, of blind, halt and withered," waited at this pool for the angel to trouble the waters; that every one was cured of whatever disease he had, by being the first then to step in; and that none were cured, except such as stepped in *first*, prove that both the diseases and the cures were entirely, or in a great degree, imaginary. There was apparently just as much efficacy in the supposed troubling of the pool by an angel, and in the diseased person's being the *first* to step in after that had been done, as there was in the command of Jesus to rise up and walk, and no more. They both affected the imaginations of the superstitious, and that effected all the cures there were in the cases.

Here too we are enabled to see how much of a miracle Jesus performed in restoring the "withered hand," for John says that the "withered" could be restored by stepping into this pool, *after* the angel had troubled it, and before any other had been in. If then the withered, or those who supposed themselves withered, could in any case be cured by the power of the imagination, they would as likely be when Jesus pretended to work a *miracle* upon them, as when they stepped into the pool.

The circumstance too that there were *so many* withered people, as it is intimated by John that there were, at this pool, shows that there is no reason in believing that they were actually withered; because that is an affection, that is exceedingly rare. Yet those at the pool, who imagined themselves withered, are as likely to have been really so, as the one whose hand Jesus is said to have restored.

The sixth case, that of the woman, who had "a spirit of infirmity," being "bound by Satan," as Jesus said (Luke 13—11 to 16); also the seventh case, the cure of one leper, (Mat. 8—2 to 4, Mark 1—40 to 44, Luke 5—12 to 14); also the eighth case, the cure of ten lepers! (Luke 17—12 to 19), (who ever saw ten lepers at a time?) also the ninth case, the cure of the dropsy, (Luke 14—2 to 4), were all undoubtedly cures of the same kind as those that were performed by Valentine Greatrak's glove, or by stepping into the pool of Bethesda *first* after it was supposed that the waters had been troubled by an angel. It is very probable that nine, out of the ten, of these lepers, did not consider themselves restored, for although one returned to thank Jesus for what he had done, the nine did not take that trouble.

We here have an opportunity to see on how slight a pretence these narrators would make up a story of a genuine, undoubted miracle. These lepers are represented as standing "afar off," from Jesus, and calling to him to be healed. He simply tells them to go to the priest. They go, and nine of them do not return. Yet Luke says the whole were cleansed. Now, if they did not return, how did he know whether they were cleansed or not? Why, he *inferred* they must have been, and related it for a fact that they were, although he *knew* nothing about it.

There is no reason for supposing that any of these cures were any better ones than those effected at the pool, and it is clear that the cures at the pool were all the work of the imagination, or that the diseases themselves were so, and that there was no efficacy in the waters; because, if there had been any efficacy in the waters, people would have learned that the second one, who should step in after the gurgling of the water, could be healed as well as the first. If the imagination cured, at the pool, diseases, that were supposed to be real, the persons, whom Jesus cured, it is reasonable to suppose, had no diseases more real, or more difficult of cure, than the others, and were restored, or apparently restored, solely by being made to imagine themselves miraculously operated upon.

There are four different cases recorded of the cure of *blind* persons, viz: one in Matthew (9—27 to 30), where two were cured; one in Mark (8—22 to 26), where one was cured; one in John (9—1 to 7), where one was cured; one in Matthew (20—30 to 34), Mark (10—46 to 52), and Luke (18—35 to 43), where one, according to Mark and Luke, and two, according to Matthew, were cured. The accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, in the last case, refer to the same transaction, as appears by the context—for it took place, as they all say, when Jesus was near Jericho; and the similarity of the language, quoted by all, as having been used by the blind person or persons, confirms the fact. True it is, these cautious and credible historians disagree as to the *number* cured; but in relating so probable facts as miracles, such a slight discrepancy does not at all impair the credibility of the men, a sto all important particulars. Such a disagreement is not, in fact, at all material, for blind men in those days, judging from the Bible, were nearly as frequent as those who could see.

These also were probably cured in the same way as were those "blind" persons, who, John says, (5—3 and 4), were cured at the pool of Bethesda—and they were probably just as blind as those, and no more so. How did it happen that the blind were so numerous? Was the blindness real, feigned, imaginary, total or partial? To give a correct answer to this last question, it is only necessary to take into consideration the *number* of those called blind, and the manner in which those at the pool were cured.

Some of these blind men also seem to have had a power of locomotion rather unusual, to say the least, in really blind persons. On one occasion, (Mat. 9—27, 28), "two blind men *followed* Jesus, and when he was come into the house, the blind men *came to him.*" On another occasion (John 9—7) he told the blind man to "go, wash in the pool of Siloam," and the blind man "went his way."

In some cases it appears that Jesus cured the blind *on certain conditions.* For example, in one case (Mat. 9—28 and 29), he required of the blind men that they should believe, *in advance,* that he was "able" to restore their sight, and consented to heal them only in proportion to their faith. It requires but half an eye to see that the object of this condition was, to have something to attribute his failure to, in case his miraculous power should not "work well." He, in that case, would unquestionably have said "O ye of little faith, why did ye doubt?" and would thus have made those asses believe that the failure was owing to their doubts. In other instances he used more jugglery and ceremony than would seem to be necessary, if he were a real miracle worker. In the case related by John (9—6 and 7), "he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and *anointed* the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said to him, go, wash in the pool of Siloam." In the case, which is related by Mark only (8—22 to 26), *he led the man out of the town to do it;* he then *spit* on his eyes, and put his hands on him, and then asked him if he could see. The man could not then see clearly, although he could see well enough to discover that a man looked like a tree. Jesus then put his hands upon his eyes again, and *bade him look up!* whereupon the man saw distinctly. Jesus then commanded him, "neither to go into the town, nor tell it to any in the

town"—a very singular command to be given by one, who was working real miracles in order to prove to the *world at large* that he was the Messiah.

We, of course, cannot say absolutely that there *could* not have been real miracles performed here; but, if there were, any but "*blind men*" can see that they were not wrought in a workmanlike manner.

The next case, being the fourteenth, that will be examined, is that of the alleged restoration of the daughter of Jairus from the dead, and is related by Matthew (9—18 to 26), Mark (5—22 to 43), and Luke (8—41 to 56). Now, supposing the story true, that the child arose, when Jesus "took her by the hand," that does not prove that a miracle was performed, because we do not know that she was dead. These narrators say only what is equivalent to saying, that those in the house *believed* her dead; but it would appear, from Luke's account, that *after* Jesus had seen the child, *he* said she was *not* dead, but that she slept.

The child, say the accounts, was twelve years old. How often is it that children of that age have fits, which, for a short time, cause them to appear dead, and are, immediately afterward, restored to health? How *soon*, after Jesus went into the room, she arose, we cannot know, because those who give us the story, did not see the transaction—they expressly say that, of his followers, only Peter, James and John were suffered to go with him. Whether Jesus lifted her up, as he did Simon's wife's mother, we do not know, but there is ground for the strongest presumption that he *did*, because "he took her by the hand."

The most rational supposition that can be formed from the three disagreeing, indefinite and and carelessly told stories, which come from men who did not see the transaction, is, that the child had a fit, (perhaps only a common fainting fit), and lay *apparently* dead at the time the father ran for Jesus; and that when he arrived *at* the house, and before he went into the room where the child was, those, that had been in the room, but had then come out, told him that she was dead; but that, by the time he had come to the child, the fit had left her, and she lay asleep; and that then, in the course of the time he remained in the room, (*how long* that might be is uncertain), he spoke to her, took her by the hand and lifted her up, and that she then had in a considerable degree recovered. If such were the case, the story has come to us in just the shape we should suppose such a story would, coming, as this does, from men, who did not see any thing that they relate, but who honestly believed, from what they *heard*, that a miracle was performed.

But there are two or three circumstances, which render it extremely doubtful whether there was any thing in this occurrence, which, to the eyes of the actual witnesses, appeared even so marvellous as the case, above supposed, would have been likely to do. One is, that Jesus, when they came to him first, and told him the child was dead, would permit but three of his disciples to go in with him; and after the transaction (whatever it might be) was over, he charged them, and the parents also, *to say nothing of it to any* one. Another link in this chain of suspicious circumstances, is, that John, who, as the others say, was an eye-witness, says not a syllable about the matter. Now since Jesus would permit but three of his disciples to go in, and charged all, who were eye-witnesses, to reveal nothing, and as John, in his narrative, obeys this injunction, the fair presumption is, that Jesus, when he heard she was dead, doubted his ability to restore her, and did not choose to have too many witnesses to a failure; and that after he had come into the room, the transaction was not of such a kind, that he thought it safe for his reputation as a miracle-worker, that it should be known abroad; but that Matthew, Mark and Luke afterward obtained an inkling of the affair, which in some way leaked out, and which proved sufficient to enable them to make such a brief account of a supposed miracle as they have done.

Are we to believe a revelation on the testimony of works done in secret, and ordered to be kept secret?

The fifteenth case is related by John (4—46 to 54) of the cure of the son of a nobleman of Capernaum. It appears that Jesus did not *see* the subject of this miracle, He was at home; the father came to Jesus, and was told by him that his son lived; he (the father) then went away alone, and, as John says, met his servants, who told him that his son was better, &c. Now, since John did not go with the father, nor see the son, or know any thing *personally* about the time of his beginning to amend, all the testimony, that we have here to support the slightest possible pretence of a miracle, is simply John's virtual declaration that he *heard* (how, or from whom, he heard it, the deponent saith not), that at the same hour when Jesus told the man his son should live, the son began to amend; and that he (John) had no doubt, from these circumstances, that Jesus wrought a miracle upon the sick man. But I suppose the day has gone by when such "circumstantial evidence" as this, is sufficient to prove a miracle.

The sixteenth case, is that related by Matthew (8—6 to 13) and Luke (7—2 to 10), of the Centurion's servant at Capernaum, and is probably the same one as the last; but as the accounts differ a little, I thought proper to consider them as referring to different transactions. Here too the person sick was at a distance from Jesus; so that even if Matthew were with Jesus at the time, (which, if true, is not stated), he could not have personally known any thing about the cure, and could only have *heard* of it, as John did in the other case. But I suppose few men would now (although many would at the time of Jesus) believe a miracle was wrought, simply because a man, who believed in miracles, should say that he had *heard*, in a particular case, of such circumstances as satisfied his mind that there was one. Besides, another part of Mat-

thew's story cannot be true. The man said his servant was "sick of the *palsy*, grievously tormented." This could not be the case, because palsy, instead of grievously tormenting folks, never *occasions* pain, but generally deprives them of all sensibility to pain.

But supposing the servant did have a sudden and painful attack of some sort, which alarmed the Centurion, and then, while the Centurion was gone to Jesus, did actually recover from it, that is no proof of a miracle, because such temporary illnesses are frequent occurrences.

I now come to the examination of those cases, where Jesus is said to have cast out devils. But we will first inquire whether there ever were such a thing as men's being possessed of devils. There is perhaps not an enlightened Christian in America, who, notwithstanding he may believe that, at the time of Jesus, men were possessed of devils, believes that they ever have been in any other instance, either before or since. And those, who believe that such was the fact then, believe it simply because a *particular set* of superstitious men, in a superstitious age, believed so, and have related some circumstances about it, which they say happened at that time. The testimony of the whole Jewish nation, *who did not also believe in Jesus,* would not have made them credit it for a moment. If the same thing had been stated in any other book than the Bible, men now would no more credit it, than they would an assertion that men were inhabited by the spirits of oxen and horses. Yet such is the unparalleled gullibility of some men in relation to every thing related in the Bible, or connected with Christianity.

There are indeed many Christians now, who do not pretend to believe in this matter literally. They will say that they suppose those individuals, out of whom Jesus was said to cast devils, were *insane*, or had some disorder, which the people of that nation, being ignorant of diseases, *attributed* to the influence of "evil or unclean spirits;" and that whatever that disorder may have been, Jesus cured it miraculously. But if such men will look at the accounts as they are told to us in the New Testament, taking the collateral circumstances, which are related, as facts, it is absolutely out of the power of the human mind, either by sophistical interpretation of language, or by any possible perversion of intellect, to believe that those persons were insane, or that they had any disorder, unless an imaginary one, other than that of being actually and unequivocally inhabited by such evil spirits, as, if they really existed, might more properly be denominated devils than any thing else. The narratives of the doings of Jesus state the *precise number* of devils, that went out of particular individuals—thus leaving no chance for equivocation, or any apology for the pretence that the persons were insane, in the ordinary acceptation of the word. For example, out of Mary Magdalen there actually went *seven devils*—seven individual spirits, or this affair of being possessed of devils was all a delusion. In other cases, Jesus is said to have cast out one, and in one instance a legion. If therefore men will believe the Bible, they must believe in devils too.

These accounts say further that these devils would *speak*. Mark says (5—12), after having spoken of a legion of devils being cast out, that "all the devils besought him, saying, send us into the swine, that we may enter into them." If we believe the truth of these narratives, there is no escape from believing that there were such living and speaking creatures as devils, who inhabited both men and—swine!

Here the believer, or rather the one who wishes to be a believer (for I do not think it possible for any person of common knowledge and common sense any longer to be actually so) may perhaps, in the height of his embarrassment, put the question, how then are these accounts to be explained, unless we believe that those, who relate them, were knaves and liars? To answer this question is very easy. The people of that nation were superstitious enough to believe in devils, (as people have sometimes believed in witches), and to believe that they entered into men, and then controlled them as they pleased. When such a belief was prevalent, it is to be expected that among the more ignorant, who composed the great body of the community, there would be multitudes, who would imagine themselves to be possessed of them, just as some person, who have believed in witchcraft, have imagined themselves bewitched. A person, who should suppose himself under the dominion of devils, would imagine himself actually compelled, by a power which he could not resist, to such unnatural and strange conduct as he believed an evil spirit would instigate men to. And this fact accounts for the conduct of the man, (or men, for here again the stories disagree), spoken of by Matthew (8—28 to 34), Mark (5—1 to 17), and Luke (8—27 to 36), who was said to live among the tombs, to be driven by the devil into the wilderness, &c. A man in this condition, could be restored in no other way than by some deception of the imagination. This man *was* so restored. He believed Jesus to be the Son of God, as is proved by the fact that he addressed him as the "Son of the most high God." He believed also that Jesus had power over evil spirits, as is proved by the circumstance that he "besought him not to torment him." When therefore this powerful being should command the devils to go out of him, he, of course, would suppose that they had left him, and would then appear the sane. As for the rest of the circumstances related, such as that of the devils talking, going into the swine, &c., they are only such *embellishments* as a story of that kind would naturally gain by a very little circulation in such a community as that—and these historians, who give us the accounts, having, like the rest of their countrymen, perfect faith in the reality of such circumstances, would relate them, as they heard them, without in the least doubting their truth. It is evident that they only recorded the flying story of the times, from the fact that

they disagree as to the number healed. Matthew says two, Mark and Luke but one. That their different accounts refer to the same transaction, is evident from the similarity of the stories, and the language of each, and also from the circumstance that they are related by each immediately after the story of Jesus's calming the tempest.

Besides the above, there are five different instances of Jesus's casting out devils. One is related by Mark (1—23 to 26), and Luke (4—33 to 35). From both these accounts, it appears that the man, out of whom the devil was supposed to be cast, considered Jesus "the Holy one of God;" and that circumstance is sufficient evidence that the cure, like the disease, was the work of the imagination.

Another case is related by Mark only, (7—25 to 30). All that Mark knew of this case, as appears from his account, was, that he *heard*, (for *he* is not supposed to have been with Jesus), that a woman came to Jesus, and told him that her daughter, who was at home, was possessed of a devil; that he told her the devil had gone out; and that when she arrived at home, she found her daughter lying on a bed. To Mark's mind, and perhaps also to the minds of some men in more modern ages of the world, these facts, thus obtained, proved a miracle.

Another case is related by Matthew (17—14 to 21), Mark (9—17 to 29), and Luke (9—38 to 42). According to Mark's account, Jesus "rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, COME OUT OF HIM, and enter no more into him." (Can any thing be imagined more ludicrous or disgusting than such a speech? Verily, "never man spake like this man"). Still, after he had said thus, "the spirit cried, and *rent him sore*, and came out of him, and he was as one dead, insomuch that many said he is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he—AROSE!" and from the circumstance that he did arise, and probably appear more calm than before, they all inferred that he had been delivered of a real devil.

This wonderful exhibition of miraculous power so astonished Jesus's disciples, that they afterwards asked him why *they* could not cast him out? (They, it seems, had attempted it, and failed, (Mark 9—18). He answered—doubtless with an air and manner becoming the solemn nature of the case—that "this kind (of devils) can come forth (be brought forth) by nothing, but by *prayer* and—*fasting!*"

Another case is related by Matthew only (9—32 to 34), of the cure of a *dumb* man, possessed of a devil. I will here add nothing, but a note of admiration, which appears to be very much needed, to the following brief, but graphic description of this affair by Matthew himself. "And when the *devil* was cast out, the dumb spake, and the multitudes marvelled!"

The last case of this kind of miracle-working, that remains to be mentioned, is that of the cure of the man, who, according to Luke (11—14), was dumb, but, according to Matthew (12—22), was both *blind* and dumb. Both accounts refer to the same transaction, as may be seen by the context following each. The difference in the accounts, of course, proves only the *honesty* of the writers; it does, *by no means*, prove their lack of inspiration, their carelessness about particulars, or their readiness to record any idle story, which they might hear, without inquiring cautiously into its truth. Each one supposed that future generations could only wish to know the simple fact that a miracle was wrought; and therefore, not imagining that they themselves could ever be suspected of having been mistaken as to the reality of the miracle, did not trouble themselves to relate many of those circumstances, that would enable men now to judge whether they actually were or not.

Matthew says that "they brought unto Christ one possessed with a devil, *blind* and dumb, and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw." Luke says, "and Christ was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake, and the people wondered."

Language could hardly be selected, that should tell a stronger tale of superstition, than is conveyed in these brief lines. Men imagining themselves possessed of a *devil!* and that the devil prevents them from *seeing!* and speaking! others standing around to see the Son of God dislodge a devil, as boys stand around to see the tricks of a juggler.

If the Bible has accomplished enough of good to atone for the numerous and mischievous superstitions, which, in various ways, it has entailed upon, and introduced into, men's minds, it has done more good than, I think, is apparent to most impartial observers of the *whole* of the history of Christendom, as compared with that of other nations of the same degree of intelligence. Even if it has not originated, it has, at least, justified, spread, and probably prolonged a belief in witchcraft and sorcery—it has introduced superstitions about a *Son* of God; ABOUT HIS VISITING THE EARTH IN THE DISGUISE OF A MAN! about a Holy Ghost, or Holy phantom; about a fictitious atonement, and a barbarous and useless sacrifice, which have for ages and centuries engrossed the minds of the few learned men, who otherwise might have been engaged in liberal schemes for improving society. And finally, it has spread wide a belief in angels, and miracles, and evil spirits—in a devil and his ten thousand deputies prowling about the universe.

I must now think that, of the thirty-three miracles of Jesus, twenty two have been disposed of in a manner, if not satisfactory to, at least, unanswerable by, the most resolute believer. Eleven remain to be examined.

One is that of calming the tempest, recorded by Matthew (8—24 to 27), Mark (4—37 to 41), and Luke (8—23 to 25). Matthew says "the ship was *covered* with the waves." Mark says "the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now *full*." Luke says "they were *filled* with water." Now we know that these accounts cannot be true, because Jesus would not have remained asleep, had this been the case. These errors are mentioned merely to show the propensity these men had to exaggeration—a propensity, that, in many other instances, is manifest enough; but which is here so palpable that it cannot be denied.

Matthew says "there arose a great tempest," and Mark says "there arose a great storm of wind." But since these men have already been convicted of exaggeration, we may now judge for ourselves how great a "tempest" would be likely to arise on a little petty lake; (fourteen miles long, and five wide;) and, unless we have a very strong desire to believe in miracles, we shall probably come to the conclusion that a slight squall arose, such as generally continues for a few minutes; that, it being in the evening (as Mark says, and as is probable from the circumstance that Jesus was asleep,) these timid and superstitous men thought they should certainly be drowned; that Jesus, being called, commanded the waves of this mighty sea to be quiet; that when this sudden squall had passed, which probably happened very soon, the waves subsided, and they then thought the act of Jesus a miracle. These narrators, although they generally appear very fond of using the word "immediately," when relating any occurrence, which they themselves could not have seen, but in relation to which that word is necessary in order to make out a good miracle, have, nevertheless, in this case, neglected, for some reason or another, to tell us how *soon*, after the command was given, quiet was restored—the fair presumption is then that the wind and waves took their own time in this matter, as they always have done in every other of the same kind.*

Another is that of Jesus's walking on the sea, related by Matthew (14—24 to 32,) Mark (6—47 to 51,) and John (6—15 to 21.) John says that after Jesus had entered the ship, "immediately it was at land whither they went"—of course, it must have been *near the shore* when Jesus came to it. Furthermore, they all agree that it was in the night; John says it was dark. Now, inasmuch as Jesus never shewed any inclination to trust himself on the water in the *day*-time, without any thing to bear him up, is it not probable that he had at this time a plank, a slightly built raft, a small boat, or something else to stand on, which those in the ship or large boat did not see, or that he walked *in* the water instead of *on* it, rather than that he attempted to perform a miracle of that sort, and at that time, when none but his disciples, and probably not even these, would observe it? If he really could walk on the water, why did he not, at least once in his life, do it in the day-time, and in the presence of a concourse of people? He surely had opportunities enough.

But perhaps it will be asked, how did Jesus get to that side of the lake, unless he walked across the water? and a person, who should simply read the accounts of this affair, without looking at the map, would probably be misled into the supposition that the boat had *crossed* the lake, to the other side from where the disciples had left Jesus, and therefore that he could not have come to them unless he had crossed the lake also. But according to John (6—23,) it was at or near Tiberias, that the disciples left Jesus, and they landed (Mat. 14—34) in "the land of Genessaret;" and it so happened that Tiberias and Genessaret are on the same side of the lake, (See Ingraham's map of Palestine) adjoining each other. Jesus, therefore, undoubtedly walked from one place to the other, (perhaps a mile or two) on the land, while the disciples went in the boat.

The third one of the eleven is that of the fig-tree, related by Matthew (21—17 to 22,) and Mark (11—12 to 23.) Matthew says the fig-tree withered away "*presently*." Mark says that as they passed the *next morning* they discovered that it was withered away. But they agree as nearly as we can reasonably suppose two such persons would, who should relate miracles upon hearsay. Since the story has nothing probable about it, and since the accounts disagree, it is probable that they both differ a little from the truth, and that the fig-tree was withered away *when* they *first* came to it. This supposition is rendered more probable by the fact that Luke, who speaks of Jesus being at Bethany (19—29 to 40,) and of some other circumstances mentioned by Matthew, says nothing about the fig-tree. It is also rendered probable by the fact that there were no figs on the tree. Mark pretends to account for there being no figs on it, by saying that the time of figs had not yet come—but this is clearly a falsehood, for if such were the truth, why did Jesus go to the tree at all? Or why did he manifest so much disappointment at not finding figs, as to "curse" even a tree?" †

* In confirmation of the truth of this explanation, I quote from Carne, a recent Christian traveller in Palestine, who says, in describing this lake, that "the boats used on it are, in some seasons of the year, much exposed from the sudden squalls of wind, which issue from between the mountains."

I have taken some pains to procure "Carne's Travels in the East," (or Letters from the East,) so as to be able to refer the reader to the page where this fact is stated; but the book is a rare one, and I have not found it. I can therefore only refer to an extract published in the American Traveller (Boston) Oct. 29, 1833, Article, Lake Tiberias.

† Mark 11—21. Master, behold the fig-tree, which thou *cursedst*, is withered away.

The fourth, related by Mark only (7—32 to 36,) is that of the cure of a man "who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech." Jesus, in order doubtlessly to have a *fair opportunity* to perform this miracle, and to do it in a manner to furnish evidence to the *world* of his *miraculous power*, "took the man aside from the multitude." When he had done this, he "put his *fingers* into his ears;" "then *spit*, and touched his tongue;" then "looked up to heaven, and *sighed*," and uttered the word Ephphatha, and thus, as Mark heard the story, opened the man's ears, and loosed the string of his tongue so that he spake plain, and then "*charged* them that they *should tell no man*" of the occurrence.

The fifth, related by John (2—1 to 10,) is that of turning the water into wine. John says that this was the first miracle that Jesus ever performed; but does not say that *he* saw it done; and if it were his first attempted miracle, it is entirely improbable that John was present. Besides, towards the close of the preceding chapter, John speaks particularly of Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael, as having become disciples of Jesus; but mentions none others as such, previous to this wedding. We must therefore suppose that John here only tells us a hearsay story. Now it would be nothing strange if Jesus were to go to a wedding—nor would it be any thing strange if they were to have wine there—nor would it be strange if Jesus should there make some pretensions to miracle-working—nor would it be strange, if, out of these circumstances, after he had obtained a little notoriety in his way, a story should be got up and circulated similar to that told by John; but it would be very strange if a man should work a miracle; and it would also be very strange that neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke should ever have heard of this miracle, if there really were one wrought, (if they had heard of it, some of them would undoubtedly have recorded it, since they have taken the pains to record so many things of no consequence at all); and it would also be very strange if the saviour of a world should perform either his first or last miracle of this kind. We should as naturally expect a Son of God would exhibit his powers by making broomsticks dance cotillions, as by such a miracle as this. Still—as was before remarked—such a man as I have supposed Jesus to have been, would, when first beginning hesitatingly to think about working miracles, be very likely to have made an attempt or pretension of this kind—and if he but made such an attempt or pretension, that circumstance alone would afford sufficient materials for a future story.

The sixth, related by Luke (7—11 to 16), is that of raising from the dead the son of the widow of Nain. This story is told by none but Luke. He, as I have said before, was a citizen of Antioch, and was converted to Christianity by Paul—of course, he never knew any thing personally of Jesus or his miracles; he must therefore have depended entirely upon the stories of others for his information. Of whom he obtained it in this instance we know not. He wrote his narrative some thirty or forty years after the death of Jesus. So that all the evidence we have here to prove an occurrence so wonderful as that of a man's being restored to life after he had once died, is a simple declaration, made many years afterward, by a man living remote from the place, and who could not have personally known any thing about what he was writing, but who has been shown heretofore to be credulous enough to believe miracles on the testimony of others.

Furthermore, neither of the other narrators, although two of them were of the twelve, give us any account of such an occurrence, although, if it really happened, they would most surely have heard of it, and if they had heard of it, they would as surely have related it; for, in order to make their stories as marvellous as possible, they have already gone so far as to relate for undoubted miracles many things, which they could not have known to be true, even if they were true.

The seventh case, that of raising Lazarus from the dead, is related by John only, (11 chapter). John does not say that he *saw* the act. If then we believe that, in this case, a man really died, and was then restored to life again, we must believe a fact, such as we could not now be made to believe if ten thousand of the most respectable men of any nation on earth should solemnly testify that they saw it. We must believe it too on the testimony of a single individual—one who gives the account forty years after the transaction is alleged to have been performed; who does not even say that he saw it; who is not supported by a single one of the many alleged eye-witnesses, nor by the testimony of any other person.

If the ten thousand should testify as I have supposed, we should then say, either that the man had not been actually dead, or that some deception or another had been practised upon the witnesses—and we should say so with perfect confidence too, because we should know, as absolutely as it is possible for us to know any thing, that such an occurrence could not have happened. Yet we are called upon to believe it in this case, upon such testimony as I have mentioned. Is it possible that the attempt can be made at this day, to impose upon men's understandings by such stuff as this?

But there is evidence tending to discredit this story of John.

One part of this evidence is, that neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke speak of the affair. Yet Luke heard of, and even related (10—38 to 42), so small and unimportant a circumstance as that of Jesus's once being in Bethany, at the house of Martha, the sister of Lazarus, and yet he never heard (as we may safely infer from the fact that he never related it) of this miracle

wrought upon Lazarus—a miracle too, that is so much more wonderful than Jesus was generally supposed to perform.

If Jesus had actually raised Lazarus from the dead, and the act could have been well authenticated, (hardly a supposable case however), it must have been evidence of the strongest character of any that his works had ever furnished, that he possessed miraculous power—and so his disciples must have considered it, if they had possessed common understandings. Yet it was never noised abroad so as that any except John ever heard of it.

Matthew (26—6 to 13), Mark (14—3 to 9), and Luke (7—37 and 38) also heard of, and related, the circumstance of Mary, whom John says (11—2) was the *sister* of Lazarus, anointing the head of Jesus with ointment, yet they neither of them utter a syllable about his raising her brother from the dead. It is difficult to account for this fact, unless we suppose that John was actually dishonest, or that he took up, believed and recorded a flying story, which an occurrence of some kind had given rise to, but which was without any foundation in truth.

Furthermore, John says (11—45, 46 and onward) what is equivalent to saying, that a part of the eye-witnesses themselves, not only disbelieved that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but believed that he was attempting to practise some imposition upon them. He says, "then *many* of the Jews, which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him, *but*," he adds, (and this "but" spoils his story) "*some* of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done." He then represents that the Pharisees forthwith attempted to apprehend him, on account of the stories that had been told them by some of those who had witnessed the transaction.

It seems hardly possible to vindicate John from the charge of actual dishonesty—for he pretends to relate even the *conversation*, which the Pharisees held on this subject, when he certainly could not have known it. He also attributes to them motives and designs, which it is impossible should ever inhabit the breasts of human beings, viz: such as wishes to take a man's life because he had raised a person from the dead. It is also incredible that they should *dare* attempt such an act, even if they wished to have it performed.

I think it would not be difficult to show that John's love of distinction, his hatred of the Pharisees, and his determination to spread Christianity, led him to dishonest lengths in other cases. He was the one, (Mark 10—35 to 41), who was so eager to obtain from Jesus a promise of preference over the rest of his disciples, in heaven, (or more probably in the earthly kingdom), as that they were offended at him. He shows the same disposition afterwards, in his own narrative, by speaking of himself, in four or five different places, as "that disciple whom Jesus loved,"—thus pretending that he himself was the favorite over the others.

He also equivocates, (21—22 and 23), by pretending that Jesus, or the one whom he supposed to be Jesus, did not mean what his words most plainly import, and what John acknowledges that the disciples at the time understood him to mean. His motive for this equivocation may be traced to a circumstance related in his Biography in Lempriere's Biographical Dictionary, where it is said that he wrote his narrative for the purpose of proving that Jesus was not a *man*, and in opposition to what he deemed an error, viz: a belief, at that time avowed, that he was but a man. This equivocation was necessary in order to make it appear that Jesus did not intend to intimate that certain things would happen, which had not happened, and were not likely to.

This purpose, in writing his narrative, accounts for his superior carefulness in relating, in connexion with the supposed miracles, any circumstances that might tend to discredit their reality; and also for the *conversations* which he relates as attending them; although it is evident that he must either have invented much of them, or adopted them from the mouths of others, without any thing like reasonable evidence of their genuineness—the former of which suppositions appears the more probable, both from his own character, (for he could then invent such conversation as would suit the circumstances of the case), and also from the fact that he could not, forty years afterward, have remembered such full, connected and unbroken conversations as he has pretended to relate.

John also (12—10 and 11) shows his bitter malignity, and his readiness to make the most diabolical charges, against such as did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah, by saying that the Chief Priests "consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death."

Finally, he has more unmeaning theological cant in his narrative than all the other three together.

Nevertheless, it is possible that John has told an *honest* story in this case of Lazarus, and one too that is true in its main features. But if he has done so, he has implicated a man, whose character is of much more consequence to the Christian religion, than his own; and that man is Jesus. Several circumstances are related in this story, which, if they are considered to have really happened, furnish palpable and glaring evidence of collusion between Lazarus and Jesus. For example—Jesus knew, *before* he went, at this time, to Bethany where Lazarus lived, that *Lazarus was dead*, (John 11—14). Now how did he (being, as appears by the context, at a considerable distance off) know this fact, unless there had been a previous understanding between them that Lazarus should die about that time? He had heard (11—3) that he was *sick*, but there is no evidence that he had *heard* of his death. On the contrary, the disciples were utterly ignorant of it (11—11, 12 and 13) until the informa-

tion unexpectedly came from Jesus himself. How came Jesus by this information without the knowledge of his disciples? If a messenger had brought it, they must have known it too, for some of them were undoubtedly all this time with him. We have no right to say that he obtained it supernaturally, because it is not yet proved that he had any supernatural power. Yet *he* knows the fact, when they do not, and there is a way by which he may have obtained this knowledge. That way is this—Lazarus may have directed his sisters to send this message to Jesus, that he was sick, and this may have been agreed upon as the signal by which Jesus might know that Lazarus was about to die. If such were *not* the purpose of this message, why was it sent? We are told that Jesus *loved* Lazarus. But why then did he not go to him immediately on hearing that he was sick, instead of waiting, apparently without any necessity, for two or three days? The reason is obvious—he waited for him to die, and he knew that he would die. But he could not have known that he would die, unless it had been previously agreed that he should die. I repeat that it cannot be said that Jesus knew, by means of his *supernatural power*, that Lazarus would die; because that would be attempting to defend the miracle, on the *evidence* of his supernatural power, instead of proving the supernatural power by the miracle. Besides, if he could know, by means of his supernatural power, either that Lazarus was dead, or that he would die, he could also, in the same way, have known that he was *sick*, and it must therefore have been unnecessary to send the information of his sickness to him. Is there then any way, other than by supposing collusion, in which this matter can be explained?

Again. Jesus declared (11—4), when he first heard of the sickness of Lazarus, that one object of this sickness was, "that the Son of God might be glorified thereby," (that is, that he himself might get some credit by it). Now, how did he know that it would terminate so as that he should get credit by it? We cannot, I again repeat, say that he knew it by means of his supernatural power, because that would be assuming him to have supernatural power, and then attempting to prove the miracle by it; whereas the power must first be proved by the miracle. Besides, there are too many cases of his making inquiries for the sake of ascertaining what his inquiries imply that he did not know, to leave any apology for pretending that he knew any thing supernaturally. There is then but one answer to the question, how he knew beforehand the manner in which this sickness would terminate? and that answer is, that it had been agreed between him and Lazarus how it should terminate, and Jesus *inferred* that he should gain some credit by it.

Again. There is something very suspicious in the manner, in which he communicated to his disciples the fact, that Lazarus was dead. He communicates it to them as if it were something, which he was aware would surprise *them*, but which nevertheless was *not* new to him. The manner, in which he *introduces* the matter, is peculiarly suspicious. He does not at once come to the point; but speaks allegorically, says Lazarus is asleep, &c., and that he must go and wake him.

Another suspicious circumstance is, that Lazarus was buried neither in a grave, nor a tomb, but in a *cave*. The man might live very well in a cave; he might himself have deposited provisions there beforehand, and he might have told his sisters where and how soon to bury him, after he was dead. He seems also to have had a very short sickness: his sisters send word to Jesus that he is sick, and the next thing we know of him is, that in about two days, (as it would appear from the story, although it is not explicitly stated), he is dead. He seems too to have been *buried* in a great hurry; for when Jesus arrived, "he had lain in the *grave* four days."

Another suspicious circumstance is, that the stone, that lay upon the cave, must be removed, (11—39), by hand too, before the supernatural power could operate so as to bring the dead man out. A stone, laying over the mouth of a cave, must be a great obstacle in the way of a miracle.

Another circumstance, of the same import, is, that when Jesus came to the work of raising Lazarus, "he cried with a *loud* voice," to call him out. Now it might be necessary to speak loudly to make a *living* man, who was in a *cave*, hear; but a dead man could have heard a less labored tone equally well.

Again. There was an altogether *unusual* ostentation about this miracle. Jesus talked a great deal about it beforehand; spoke of it as an affair that was to accomplish great things in the way of glorifying God, and *himself* too.

Another circumstance against the reality of this resurrection from the dead, is, that Jesus never raised any others from the dead. (I here take it for granted that it has been shown that there is no sort of reason for pretending that he raised the son of the widow of Nain, or the daughter of Jairus). If he could really raise men from the dead, why did he not show his miraculous power again and again, in this way, so as to place it beyond dispute; instead of curing sick folks, casting out devils, spitting in men's eyes, filling them with clay, touching their tongues, putting his fingers in their ears, and such like disgusting farces, ten thousand of which would be no evidence of any thing except that he was an impostor or a fool? If he could really raise men from the dead, he could have established himself at once on the credit of his miracles. And yet one solitary case, and that too surrounded by circumstances of the strongest suspicion, is all the evidence he ever gave, in his whole career, of his power to raise the dead.

Again. Judging *naturally* of a portion of this story (11—45 and 46) we have abundant evidence that a part of the eye-witnesses themselves detected the hoax on the spot. The story is that *some* of them believed, but that others went forthwith to the Pharisees—known enemies of Jesus—and made such representations that measures were immediately taken to have him apprehended. How is this conduct of these witnesses to be accounted for, unless they discovered the cheat?

It appears also (John 12—10), that the Chief Priests were satisfied—probably by the story of the same witnesses—that Lazarus also was a knave, for they are said to have consulted to put him to death—a thing, which they never could have dreamed of doing for the cause which John assigns.

The world has been full of alleged miracles, but I do not believe another record of one can be produced, containing such irresistible evidence of fraud as this.*

To proceed with the examination of the remaining miracles. There are two cases, where Jesus is said to have fed the multitude miraculously. One case is mentioned by Matthew (14—15 to 21), Mark (6—41 to 44), Luke (9—12 to 17) and John (6—3 to 14), where five thousand (an undoubted exaggeration—another "great tempest") were said to have been fed from five loaves and two fishes. The other instance, where he is said to have fed four thousand, is mentioned only by Matthew (15—32 to 38) and Mark, (8—1 to 9). All that is necessary to reply to such accounts as these, is, first, that neither of those, who tell the story, says that he himself was present, and even if any one of them had said so, they have all been convicted of so much exaggeration and misrepresentation, that they would not deserve to be credited so far as to have a miracle, or any other improbable story believed on their testimony—and secondly, that if Jesus ever had any thing to do in distributing food to five thousand men, who believed in his miraculous power, there were then five thousand probable chances; and if he ever had any thing to do in distributing food to four thousand of the same sort of believers, there were then four thousand probable chances, that stories respecting the circumstance would be told, and would get magnified into a miracle, although there were none, and that these stories would be believed by all his followers—these narrators among the rest—who should not absolutely know the contrary, and who were eager to believe every marvellous story about him, of which there was to their minds a possibility of truth.

In the last of these two cases, a very good reason can be conjectured, why the fragments, that remained, should be *equal* to the amount distributed. It appears (Mat. 15—32, Mark 8—2) that this company had been in "the wilderness" three days, and it is probable that the loaves and fishes had been there the same length of time. The climate of Judea is warm.

Another case is that of the miraculous draught of fishes. It is related by Luke only (5—4 to 11). He says that fishes enough were caught in one net, at one draught, to fill two "ships" so full that they began to sink. (Mr. Luke, that's a great story to tell). Matthew (4—18 to 22) and Mark (1—16, 18) both speak of the same occasion, and of some of the incidents related by Luke, yet neither says any thing about any fishes being taken—the probability is, therefore, that Luke was misinformed in this respect. Besides, Luke says (5—9 and 10) that John was there, and that he "was *astonished* at the draught of the fishes which they had taken"—yet, for some reason or another, John did not see fit to vouch for this miracle, or even to allude to it—perhaps he had a little more discretion than Luke.

One miracle only remains. This is related by Luke only (22—50 and 51). He says that when a servant of the High Priest had his ear cut off, Jesus touched it, and healed it. It is a sufficient answer to this, to say that Luke was not there, and probably never heard even of the ear being cut off until many years afterward—that during this time a story about so insignificant an incident as the cutting off of a man's ear, would very naturally gain the appendage, which is here attached to it, viz: that it was also healed. But there is another answer, which, even if it stood alone, would be sufficient. That is, that although Matthew, Mark and John (two of whom were of the twelve, and were probably at or near the spot at the time) relate the fact of the ear being cut off, neither of them says a word about its being healed.

Thus much for the reality of those miracles, that have imposed on a larger proportion of enlightened men, in *modern* times, than at the time when they were supposed to have been performed. If an hundredth part of the effort, which has been made to prove these events to have been really supernatural, had been directed (as on the plainest principles of reason it should have been) to the accounting, in a *natural* manner, for the *stories respecting them*, the difficulty would have long since vanished.

Honesty of *intention* may, nevertheless, in general, fairly be accorded to these writers, in circulating these stories about miracles, for the truth of which they do not explicitly vouch as eye-witnesses. Some of these transactions were probably supposed by Matthew and John, who were of the twelve, to have occurred when they were absent; and they, having often seen him, as they believed, cast out devils, and heal the sick, which, to their minds, were as real miracles as the raising of the dead, or the removal of a mountain, would not in general doubt in the least the truth of any stories that they might hear. Mark and Luke, not being

* What evidence is there of the deliberate villainy of Mahomet, Matthias or Joe Smith, that can compare with this evidence of similar conduct on the part of Jesus?

Or what stronger evidence of his knavery can be wanted than his pretence of calming the tempest?

of the twelve, but being, Luke certainly, and Mark probably, subsequent converts, of course depended upon the stories of others for every thing they relate. Luke, depending upon this source of information, has gone so far as to relate (Chap. 1), for realities, even the *conversations*, that *angels* were said to have held with persons on earth fifty or sixty years before the time when he wrote his narrative. Can any stronger evidence be desired to prove that many of those conversations and circumstances, which these narrators recorded so many years after the transactions, were such as their own imaginations, from having long dwelt upon those occurrences, and the imaginations of others, among whom the stories had previously circulated, furnished as appendages to the truth? Or can any stronger proof be required of the credulity and superstition of these writers, or of their readiness to adopt any story, however improbable in itself, that should be floating in that community? a community, the very atmosphere of which, it would seem, must have been saturated with reports of the marvellous works of the various Christs or Messiahs, who each appear to have been attempting to prove their pretensions by the same kind of means. Yet it is almost entirely this kind of hearsay testimony, such as would be scouted at in a Court of justice, if offered for the purpose of proving the most common and natural events, upon which men believe in occurrences vastly more improbable than any that ever resulted from natural causes.

One argument, that is frequently alluded to in support of the reality of the miracles of Jesus, is perhaps worthy of a notice here, in addition to what has been said. This argument is, that even the opposers of Jesus acknowledged that he wrought true miracles. One answer to this argument is, that their admissions are not at all binding upon us: and therefore even if they did make them, we have an undoubted right to inquire whether they may not have been mistaken. And if we make this inquiry, we shall unquestionably find that they may have been, because among them a miracle was considered to be a very common occurrence, and capable of being wrought apparently by almost any one who was disposed to attempt it. It would be nothing strange therefore if some of the opposers of Jesus should acknowledge that he wrought miracles. He himself virtually acknowledges (Mat. 24—24) that the false Christs could work miracles, and also that the man, who used his name to cast out devils (Mark 9—38, 39 and 40), wrought real miracles.

Another answer is, that these admissions generally appear to have been made, if made at all, not upon actual observation, but upon the representations of others. They also appear not to have been *heard*, by these writers who relate them, but simply to have been *heard of*, or *inferred*, by them; as they evidently must have been in the case of Lazarus (John 11—47), because these disciples could not have been present at the consultations held on this subject by the Priests and other leading men. What then would a million of such facts be worth to prove miracles?

There are a few additional circumstances tending, so obviously, to confirm the views I have taken of the miracles of Jesus, that they are not to be omitted.

Luke says (23—8 and 9) that when Jesus was brought before Herod, Herod *desired* to see him work some miracle, and asked him many questions; but that Jesus answered nothing. It appears that Herod intended to deal uprightly with Jesus, and was also prepared to believe the evidence of miracles. Why then did not Jesus, if he possessed miraculous power, take advantage of such an opportunity, to do something before this assembly to prove that he was what he had professed to be?

At another time the Jews (John 2—18 to 21) asked him to show them some sign (miracle) as an evidence of his right to attempt to drive them from the temple—and a very reasonable request it was. But the only miracle, that he proposed to work, was to rebuild the temple in three days, provided they would first destroy it. But they, like rational men, had not sufficient confidence in his power to do it, to induce them to demolish it, for the sake of giving him an opportunity to try the experiment.

John says that Jesus here referred to "the temple of his body." This is evidently another of John's equivocations, for if he did refer to his body, he was a cheat and an intentional deceiver, since he must have known that he was, by his language, causing them all to understand him as referring to the temple, in which they then were.

In the early part of his preaching, when he was at Nazareth, (Luke 4—16 to 30), he went into the synagogue, and pretended that he was the one who had been prophesied of, but virtually acknowledged that they had a right to expect that he would show them some miracle, by which they might know that he was what he pretended to be—and the only reason he assigned for not performing one, was this potent one, viz: that a prophet would not be respected in his own country. Those, who heard him, were so offended at what appeared to them (reasonably too) an attempt to dupe them, that they thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of a hill, as if they intended to cast him down headlong; but when they had come there, "he, passing through the midst of them, went his way"—which language, if we had the true version of the affair, would probably read thus—"when they had frightened him by pretending to be about to cast him headlong down the hill, they let him go."*

John, speaking of another occasion, says (12—37) "though he had done so many miracles

* Luke says (2—52) that as Jesus grew up to manhood, he "increased in favor with God and *man*.' Now this affair took place in "Nazareth, where he had been brought up," (Luke 4—16). He seems therefore never to have got into very high "favor" with the people of his own village; for had he done so, they would not have been likely, on this occasion, to have treated him quite so shabbily.

before them, yet they believed not on him." It appears *extremely* probable that God would send a messenger on earth, and, in order to prove him to the world to be his messenger, should give him miraculous power, and that then this messenger should not be able to perform miracles of such a kind as would convince even eye-witnesses.

In another instance Matthew says (13—58) "and he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Now if it was the great purpose of his mission to bring men to believe on him, when he found any incredulous, that circumstance, instead of furnishing a reason why he should *not* work miracles before them, was only an additional reason why he should not fail to work such as would inevitably convince them.

Mark, (6—5 and 6), speaking of the same occurrence, says, "and he *could* do there no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them, and he marvelled because of their unbelief." This declaration of Mark virtually denies his miraculous power *in toto*, because if he possessed it, he could certainly, wherever he might be, have found something beside sick folks upon which to exert it.

When the Pharisees wished to see some evidence of his being what he pretended to be, (Mark 8—11 to 13), he appeared (to his disciples at least) *deeply afflicted* that men's hearts should be so *hard* as not to believe without evidence, and said he would not show them any sign, but "left them and departed." Mark says the Pharisees asked him the question "tempting him." But the question was certainly a proper one, and what evidence is there, that their motives, in asking it, were not of the same character?

For some reason or another, Jesus was very suspicious of the enlightened part of the community—a little more so: it seems to me, than a genuine Messiah would have any occasion to be. He was continually apprehending some trap, or design against him. He was also continually laboring to excite the prejudices of his disciples against them—conduct not very consistent with the idea that he was really a superior being.

Again. Jesus told his disciples (Mark 11—23), that if they were to command a mountain to move, *and should not doubt in their hearts that it would move at their bidding*, it actually would move. Now why did not he himself remove a mountain, if it could be so easily done, and thus present to all future generations a convincing and eternal monument of his Messiahship? One such miracle would be worth a million performed upon persons that pretended to be sick, or possessed of devils. It would have been worth a million of those pretended miracles, that, like all the other pretended miracles with which the world has been filled, vanished at the moments, and left no trace behind. But one answer readily occurs to such a question, viz: he could not.

Some may say that it did not become him to perform miracles, that would not accomplish any physical good—but if he were such a being as he pretended to be, and his doctrines were true, it was of more importance to bring men to believe these facts, than it was to cure all the sick people that ever lived. He ought therefore to have adapted his miracles to the accomplishment of the most important purpose he had in view.

John says (6—30), that on a certain occasion, the people asked him directly, "What sign shewest thou then, that we may *see*, and believe thee? What dost thou *work?*" This was putting the question home to him, and why did he not meet it, if he could, as he evidently ought? Could any request have been more reasonable, or more candid? Or could any combination of circumstances whatever have called upon him more urgently to display his miraculous power, if he had any, than did those in which he was then placed? It appears by the context, that there was an assemblage of people present, who had taken much pains to find where he was, and to come to him, and their question implies a readiness to be convinced by miracles. Yet all the satisfaction, which this man, who went about the country boasting what he *could* do, gave to these honest, proper and candid demands, was to evade *them*, to stand on his reserved rights like one who had nothing else to stand upon, and then to run into a long fanfaronade about his being the bread that came down from heaven, about his being better bread than the manna that was given to the Israelites, about the effect of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood,* and such like stuff, disgusting enough to sicken any one except such as have made up their minds, in advance, to swallow, as a delicious morsel of divine truth, any thing, and every thing, that may be found in the Bible, be it whatever it may.

John also (6—66), after having related the above affair, adds, "From that time many of his *disciples* went back," (as well they might) "and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, will ye also go away?" The terms of his question to the twelve seem to imply that *all* his disciples, who were present, except the twelve, deserted him at this time. But whether all deserted him, or not, there can be no reasonable doubt, judging from John's account, that a large portion of them did. Now it appears, by the former part of the chapter, that but a short time before, he had five thousand persons following him—and yet he now finds himself so nearly destitute of friends, that he is afraid that even his chosen few will desert him also. It has been said by the advocates of Christianity, that we ought not to consider the reality of the miracles of Jesus as resting solely on the testimony of the narrators, but as being supported by the convictions of great numbers of eye-witnesses. How, let it be asked,

* A rite grosser even than that of drinking from the skull bone of Odin, and more appropriate to be observed by cannibals than civilized men.

will those advocates pretend to meet the fact above referred to? Here were "many" men, who had followed Jesus so long, that John calls them "his disciples,"—men, who undoubtedly had seen as much evidence of his miraculous power as he was able to exhibit—who were undoubtedly credulous enough to have been easily deceived by pretended miracles, and who yet desert him, and refuse to follow him any longer. The testimony therefore of "many" of his own followers, credulous and simple as they were, instead of being in favor of the reality of his miracles, is directly and positively against them. The inquiry may now safely be put, whether Christians have it in their power to put into their case, any evidence that can control this otherwise decisive testimony, which comes from those whom they had all along claimed as their own witnesses?

If any one wish now to determine whether a sufficient answer have been given to the alleged miracles of Jesus, he has but to look back, and see whether he can put his finger upon any individual case, and say that the evidence relating solely to that case is conclusive that there must have been a miracle. Unless it be *conclusive* of that fact, it is unreasonable at all to regard it; because the probability must always be against the miracle so long as there is a discoverable lack or uncertainty in the evidence.*

The supernatural occurrences, that are said to have taken place at the death of Jesus, may properly be referred to in connexion with the miracles.

Matthew (27—45), Mark (15—33) and Luke (23—44) say that while Jesus was on the cross, there was, for three hours previous to his death, "*darkness* over all the land" The testimony of Mark and Luke to this matter is not worth noticing, because there is no reason to suppose that they state any thing but a hearsay story. As respects Matthew, he has said enough to prove, that, if there were any darkness at all, there was none that was so extraordinary as it must be supposed, from the fact of his mentioning it, that he intended to have people believe it to be. In the first place, if it had been thus extraordinary, the Jews must have been alarmed, and have desisted from the execution; but the fact that they did not desist, although by so doing, at any time during these three hours, they might have saved the life of Jesus, is sufficient evidence that there was no such darkness. Matthew (27—36 to 49) says also what is equivalent to saying, that those, who witnessed the crucifixion, felt a curiosity to see whether any thing extraordinary, or supernatural would happen, but saw nothing of the kind.—"Sitting down, they watched him there." He then adds that some of them said, "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." The "Chief Priests, Scribes and elders" also said "he saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he will have him." And again, but just before his apparent death, when he had cried "Eli, Eli," &c., and one had then run to put a sponge to his mouth, "the rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come and save him." These things show that there was such a curiosity felt as I have mentioned, and that this curiosity continued until they supposed him dead. Now, is it to be believed that these men would have remained there, on the look-out for marvels, up to the very moment of his last gasp, as they supposed, and would then have so coolly said "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come and save him," when they had been witnesses, for three hours, of a continued and surprising "darkness over all the land," at mid-day? The thing is incredible—the falsehood is too bare to be disguised for a moment. John makes no mention of this darkness.

Matthew says also (27—50 to 53) that when Jesus *died*, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints, which slept, arose, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." But he does not say that he *saw* these things. Now is the word of this man Matthew—a man, nearly half of whose narrative appears to have been but the work of a "terrible-accident-maker"—to be taken for such facts as these? Who but he had ever heard of the earth's quaking, the rocks rending, graves opening, dead rising, &c.? No human being on earth, that we have any evidence. Besides, even John, who says (19—25 to 27) that he stood by the cross, and that Jesus, while on the cross, spoke to him, says not a word of any such events; yet there is not room for a reasonable doubt that he would have done so, had they ever happened.

Besides, it is incredible that the Jews, who knew that Jesus pretended to be the Messiah, and who were among the most superstitious people that ever lived, should not have been appalled by such a scene, if any such had happened, and have been converted; yet they were not converted; nor did they, although as I have said before, they were on the look-out for marvels, see any thing to change their minds in relation to him.

This story again shows the extent of the delusion among the followers of Jesus, and that Matthew was ever ready to relate, for truth, not only every thing, however impossible, that he heard spoken of, but probably also some things which he did not hear spoken of.

* If the reader wish any further confirmation that this view of the miracles of Jesus is correct, let him read the "Apocryphal New Testament," from which he will at least learn what kind of miracles it was common for the early Christians to believe in, and will thus be enabled to judge whether such works, as I have supposed the pretended miracles of Jesus to have been, would not have been likely, at that time, and among so superstitious a people, to have passed for true miracles.

CHAPTER IV.

The Prophecies.

Of those predictions in the Old Testament, which are sometimes regarded as prophecies, only one, beside such as are said to relate to Jesus, will be particularly noticed ; and that, not because it has any resonable claims to be considered a prophecy, but because it is frequently mentioned as such.

It is said to refer to the present state of the Jews. It is contained, I believe, principally, in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, and the 26th of Leviticus—and was uttered by Moses—how many centuries before the time of Jesus, I leave to others to calculate. I have refered to these chapters, and if the reader attaches a feather's weight to the predictions interspersed through them, I ask him, before going farther, to turn to the chapters, and read the whole of them. I hardly believe there is, in the country, a man of common sense and common intelligence, who will read them, and will then look an unbeliever in the face, and say he believes that Moses had any, the most distant, reference to the state of the Jews at this time, or that he intended the most remote intimation that any of those punishments, which he threatened, would be visited upon the Jews on account of their rejection of any Messiah, or any being like a Messiah.

Moses was in the habit of pretending to have personal communications from Deity, in private, and to receive (Mahomet-like) from him those instructions, which, as the pretended agent of God, he imparted to the ignorant, superstitious, simple and credulous Israelites.* In this way he imposed upon, and preserved his influence over them. He was in the habit also of promising to them every variety of worldly prosperity, if they would obey the commands, which he, as if in the name of God, enjoined upon them, and of threatening them apparently with all the worldly evils that he could conceive of, in case of their disobedience.

In the context immediately preceding these chapters, he gives the Israelites various commands as usual, and then follows them with such promises and threatenings as would naturally appear to him necessary to insure obedience. Among a variety of other threatened calamities, he enumerates dispersion by their enemies, and, on the other hand, among the promises, he enumerates, in palpable, and almost literal, contrast to the threat, success in putting their enemies to flight ; but in all this he says no more about a Messiah than he does about Vulcan or Neptune. And those predictions, which some would fain have understood as intended to refer to the present condition of the Jews, are such as would not now be thought of by Christians, as having any reference to any thing but the case then in hand, had not the advocates of Christianity, in order to support the truth of the Bible, been driven to the necessity of grasping at shadows instead of realities.

But there is one way, in which every man can settle all questions in relation to these predictions, viz : by answering to himself the question, whether, if the Jews had *never been dispersed*, he would consider these predictions intended as prophecies, and as having so *failed*, as that their failure would be substantial evidence against the truth of the Bible ? If such a *failure* would not have been evidence *against* the truth of the Bible, such a fulfilment, as is set up for them, cannot be evidence in support of it.

The idea that God dispersed the whole nation of Jews, and that he continues them in that dispersed state, simply because they were and are not convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, or because a few of their nation, many centuries ago, put him to death, is consistent with the Old Testament doctrine that Cod punnishes the children for the iniquities of the parents, and also with the New Testament doctrine that God will punish men for not believing what appears to them improbable—but it is not consistent with the views that unbiassed minds have of the nature of justice.

Many people think the present temporal condition of the Jews is evidence that God is puning them for their obstinacy in not believing in Jesus. Now the condition of many millions of Africans is far worse than that of the Jews ; but can any one of those, who know so much about God's designs in bringing calamities upon particular nations, tell us what he is punishing the Africans for ?

Do the ancient and modern conditions of the Jews furnish any more evidence that they were once God's *favorite* nation, (as the Bible pretends), or that they are now the objects of his dis-

* He pretended to them that the Almighty wrote the ten commandments "*with his own finger*," on the two tables of stone, and gave them to him—although he acknowledges that he was absent in the mountain forty days—a time sufficient for him to have written them himself, and a little longer than would probably have been necessary for the Almighty, (Deut. 9—9 to 11).

He also, when there were thunder and lightning and a cloud (and nothing more, as any body may satisfy himself by reading the verses hereafter referred to) on Mount Horeb, told the Israelites that the LORD *was speaking to them, out of the fire.* He also stood between them and the mountain, and pretended to interpret the thunder, and to give to them the meaning of the Lord in their own language, (Deut. 4—11 and 12—also 5—4, 5, 22 to 28).

like, than do the ancient and modern conditions of the Africans, of *their* having once stood, and of their now standing, in the same relations to God?

Suppose the inhabitants of some petty province in India should pretend that their ancestors had once been the favorites of Deity, could they not, by referring to their history, and to the Shaster which they suppose God has given them, support their pretensions to that distinction just as strongly as the Bible does those of the Jews? And could not we, in their present condition, find as much proof that Deity had become offended with them, as we can, in the present condition of the Jews, that God is offended with them?

Let us now look at those predictions, that are said to foretell a Messiah, and to have been fulfilled by Jesus. I know of three only that are worthy of notice.

The first commences at the thirteenth verse of the fifty-second chapter of Isaiah, and extends through the subsequent chapter.

It is a sufficient answer, for the present, to this description of the "servant of the Lord," as he is called, to say, that it is so indefinite, that it would apply to many others as well as to Jesus—and even if it delineated the character and history of Jesus a little more nearly than those of any other person, still it is entirely too indefinite to furnish any thing like reasonable grounds for believing that Isaiah foresaw either a Messiah, his character or history. Almost every paragraph, that applies with any justness to Jesus, would also apply equally well to a great number of those men who pretended to be prophets, and who were killed by the Jews.

In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew (30th, 31st, and 34th verses), Jesus accuses the Jewish nation of having "persecuted, scourged, killed and crucified the prophets, the wise men and scribes, which had been sent unto them." In the thirty-seventh verse he says, "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that *killest the prophets*, and stonest them that are sent unto thee," &c. It appears from these declarations, that if Isaiah intended by his description of a "servant of the Lord," only a general description of the characters and fates of those, who, in different ages of the Jewish nation, professed to speak to the Jews in the name of the Lord, his language would apply to them, with the same propriety that it would to Jesus; and it is far more probable that he should have had those men in his mind than a Messiah, because he had personal opportunity of observing their characters and fates. They were men, to whom the Jews not only refused to listen, but whom also (as appears by the language of Jesus before quoted) they treated with the greatest indignity, insult and cruelty. *They*, far more than Jesus, might be said to be "men of sorrows and acquainted with grief," for they could have had but few friends or followers. *They* "had no form, or comeliness, or beauty, that caused them to be desired"—*they* were "brought as lambs to the slaughter"—*they* must have been, by those who believed in them, "esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted"—*they* were "cut off out of the land of the living"—*they* had "done no violence, nor was any deceit found in *their* mouths." They were probably inoffensive, deluded men, whose imaginations were filled with extravagant notions about God's intercourse with men, and his method of governing them; and, owing to this cause, they were continually dreaming that God came to themselves, and commanded them to declare to the Jews that this evil, and that evil, would come upon them, and that this and that great and important religious event was about to happen. But the Jews, having no confidence in them, persecuted and destroyed them.

Isaiah speaks of the Almighty making the soul of his "servant an offering for sin"—and this language perhaps may at first view appear to have more relation to Jesus than it could have to a prophet. But, if—as all men of common sense, who disregard authority, believe—sacrifices are of no avail, and the doctrine that God requires them imputes to him, not only absurdity, but injustice also, and unnecessary and barbarous cruelty, then this intimation, that the soul of the "servant of the Lord" was to be made an offering for sin, is one, which Isaiah could not have been dictated by God to have uttered, and it could with truth apply neither to Jesus, nor any one else.

But should it yet be contended that Jesus *was* made an offering for sin, (a supposition, which certainly cannot be proved), it might then be replied that there can be little doubt that Isaiah, who, of course, believed in the utility of sacrifices, believed that every one of those, who were slain for preaching (as he supposed) in the name of the Lord, were made offerings for sin. It was perfectly natural that he should believe so. How otherwise would a man, with his views about God, about the moral condition of the Jews, about the necessity of sacrifices, and about the *religious character of those who were slain*, account for the fact that God permitted them to be slain, than by supposing that they were made offerings for sin?

If he considered them offerings for sin, it was then perfectly natural for him to believe that these sacrifices would redeem many, and that the individuals, supposed to be offered as sacrifices, would "see their seed," (for those redeemed by them could be called *their* seed, with the same propriety that those redeemed by Jesus could be called *his* seed)—that *they* "should see the travail of *their* souls and be satisfied," &c. So that considering this description of the "servant of the Lord," in whatever light we may, it will still apply to many of these supposed prophets with nearly, if not entirely, the same force that it would to Jesus, even if he were what Christians suppose him to have been.

There are strong reasons for believing that Isaiah referred to such, *generally*, as he esteemed the servants and prophets of the Lord, but who were despised and persecuted by the Jews.

If he meant a Messiah, and if he himself were actually a prophet, why did *he* not (as well as Daniel) use the word Messiah, instead of one so indefinite and general in its application as servant? If he meant a Messiah, why did he not tell us more about him—when he would appear, &c.? Above all, why did he not describe him so that, when he should appear, he might be identified by the Jews, and distinguished from all others?

But suppose he did actually mean a Messiah—what then? The fact that Isaiah expected a Messiah, or that he dreamed or imagined that the Lord told him a Messiah was to come, does not prove at all that there ever was to be a Messiah. The fact, that the whole Jewish *nation* expected a Messiah, is no evidence that a Messiah was actually to come. The *combined* facts, that a Messiah was predicted, that a Messiah was generally expected by the inhabitants of Judea, that he was expected near a particular time, and that, about that time, one or seventy appeared, each pretending to be the Messiah, do not prove, or have any sort of tendency to prove, that there ever was, or ever was to be, any such being as a Messiah. Judging naturally on all these facts, they are only evidence that some superstitious man, whose head was full of marvellous thoughts about what God would do for those whom the individual supposed to be his favorite nation, *dreamed*, or imagined that God told him, that He would send a Messiah; that this individual proclaimed what he supposed God had told him; that the nation, who were always ready to expect some extraordinary interposition in their behalf, were favorably struck with the idea of a Messiah; that the belief, that one would come, became prevalent; and that, in consequence of that general belief, a great many, were so infatuated as to imagine, or so dishonest as to pretend, (knowing the contrary), that they themselves were the individuals appointed by God to be Messiahs, and did actually claim to be such. There is nothing mysterious, or supernatural, or improbable, in such a combinatiou of facts. They all, in a community so superstitious as that of Judea, would *naturally* follow the simple one, that some priest, or some one whom the people regarded as a prophet, imagined that God would send a Messiah, or dreamed that God told him he would send one.

This idea of a Messiah is one, that would be very likely to occur to the mind of a priest, or one who should believe himself a prophet, among a people like the Jews, who believed in sacrifices, believed themselves the special favorites of God, and believed also that God frequently interposed miraculously for their welfare. This priest, from the nature of his office and employment, would naturally have his mind occupied with thoughts about God's intentions respecting his favorite people, and his designs in relation to their religious welfare. It would be nothing remarkable if such an individual, who should imagine that there was a necessity for some *new* interposition of God in favor of his people, and should believe that God frequently sent messengers to them, should hit upon the idea that God, in order to meet this new and uncommon necessity, would send an extraordinary messenger to them, and, (since this priest believed in the necessity of sacrifices), that he should also believe that this messenger would be made a sacrifice for the sins of the nation. Nor would it be remarkable, if such an idea, expressed by a priest, for whom the people had some veneration, or by a supposed prophet, should strike the minds of so superstitious a people as the Jews so favorably, and as being so probable, that the belief should become prevalent, that God had supernaturally conveyed this idea to the mind of the priest, or supposed prophet, and, of course, that it would be realized. If such were the fact, it would then be very natural that, among a people where many were so infatuated as to imagine themselves prophets, there should be many, who should imagine themselves, or claim to be, Messiahs—and if a supposed prophet had predicted the time of the coming of this Messiah, that would be the time when these deluded or dishonest Messiahs would appear, and proclaim their characters, and set up their claims.

Supposing such to have been the cause of the appearance of all the pretended Messiahs that appeared about the time of Jesus, and supposing him to have been one of these deluded or dishonest men, the mystery of the fulfilment (such as it was) of the prediction is then all explained in a natural and probable manner, with the exception of Jesus's being put to death, —a fact, which cannot be explained by the existence of any general belief that the Messiah was to be cut off—since Jesus was not crucified on account of any intention, on the part of those who crucified him, to make good the prediction. Still, if it be said that his being slain is a proof of the prophesy, and of his being the Messiah, then, the answer is, that *others* of these pretended Messiahs were also slain—so that by this means also it is impossible to identify the real Messiah.

One of these pretended Messiahs was killed by order of Festus;* another was burnt alive by Vespasian.† One Theudas got a sect after him (probably under the pretence of being the Messiah), and was then slain: also one Judas, (Acts 5—36 and 37). How many others were slain I know not. It is probable however that a considerable number of them were. (See Josephus, Book 2d—Chap. 13).

The prediction then, that the Messiah should be offered as a sacrifice for sin, (if in reality there were any such prediction), would doubtless apply to some, and perhaps to many, others, as well as to Jesus. So that here too there is a complete failure of identity.

But I apprehend that Christians, who may read this book, will, before they have gone

* See Newton on the Prophecies, Chap. 19.
† Same.

through with it, find still another difficulty in the way of their making Jesus answer the de scription of their predicted Messiah. That difficulty will consist in their inability to prove that Jesus was ever slain at all. I think they will find that the evidence, instead of proving that he *was* slain, comes much nearer proving directly the reverse, viz: that he was *not* slain. If such should be the case, their Messiah will then most surely be "cut off." Should the fact of his death be left, by the evidence, in the least *uncertainly*, the prediction, as applicable to him, must be considered to have failed; because prophecy, no more than any other supernatural event can be reasonably proved by *doubtful* evidence. Both the prediction and the fulfilment must be incontestibly established, or no prophecy is shown.

Another prediction, that was to be noticed, is in Daniel 9th,—25 and 26.* It is here stated that the Messiah shall appear in sixty-nine *weeks* "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem," which appears, from the context, to have been about the time of the prediction. Commentators have said that a week here *means* seven years. Whether they have sufficient authority for saying so, I neither know nor care. Still, if by calling it seven years, instead of seven days, the prediction can be made to look any more nearly like a prophecy, why, then call it seven years. The time for the appearing of the Messiah would then be fixed at the period of four hundred and eighty-three years from the time of the prediction. Did Jesus appear *precisely* at that time? The little search I have made does not enable me to settle that question, or to say certainly whether any one else ever did. I can only say that I have never known it to be even hinted that he did. He undoubtedly appeared *about* that time, as did a great number of others; and the reason why all appeared near that time, undoubtedly was, that that was the time when a Messiah was expected.

In the twenty-sixth verse it is said that "after three score and two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off." Calling the week seven years, in this case as in the other, the true Messiah ought then to have lived four hundred and thirty-four years; (He was to have been a marvellous personage in point of age as well as in other respects)—but Jesus lived to be only about thirty-two or thirty-three years old—leaving the slight deficiency of four hundred years.

There is no way, that I have discovered, by which the believer can get rid of this dilemma. If the week mean but seven days, Jesus did not, in the first place, appear at the proper time for the true Messiah, and he also lived too long; but if we call the week seven years, then he did not live long enough.

But this prediction fails in another particular. Daniel calls "the Messiah, the *Prince*." He then says, after having previously spoken of "the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem," that "the street shall be built again, and the wall even in troublous times." It is evident from this language and the context, that Messiah was to be a *temporal* prince, and it is probable that *he* was to restore and build Jerusalem.

Daniel says also, that "after three score and two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off, and the people of the prince that shall *come*, shall destroy the City and the sanctuary," &c. It is evident from this language also, that Messiah was understood to be a temporal prince, and that he was to be *succeeded* by a foreign prince and an enemy.

Passages also in the New Testament, applied to Jesus by his biographers, show that a temporal prince had been expected. Matthew (2—6) represents one of the old supposed prophets as saying that "out of Bethlehem should come a GOVERNOR, that should *rule* God's people Israel." Luke also (1—69, 71) puts into the mouth of Zecharias a prediction, that the nation was to be saved by the Messiah "from their *enemies*, and from the *hand* of all them that hated them." Such things could be spoken only of a temporal ruler or deliverer.

There can be no doubt, indeed all Christians admit, that the Jews *expected* a temporal prince, (although perhaps one, who was also to be made a spiritual sacrifice, *after* having liberated the nation from all its temporal dangers and calamities), and the language of Daniel, above quoted, most clearly authorized that expectation. To say that it did not, is to say no less than that since that time words have changed their meaning. If then such were the true meaning of the prediction, Jesus certainly fulfilled it not in the least tittle, and of course was not the Messiah. But if such were not its meaning, the least that can then be said of the prediction, is, that it was made in such deceitful language as to cheat the Jews, and prevent their identifying the true Messiah, whenever he might appear.

Unless the prediction described the Messiah so accurately that he could be unequivocally identified, certainly it was no prophecy. Such *was* the case here. The very people, to whom it was predicted that he should be sent, and whom he was to redeem and reign over, did *not* identify him in the person of Jesus. He did not in any important particular, or at least in any greater degree than many others, answer the description; and therefore, even if he were the true Messiah, the Jews did rightly in rejecting him, because it was their duty to be governed by the description.

Furthermore, it is evident, from various circumstances, that Jesus himself originally understood the prediction as did the Jews, and that he did, at one time, expect to have become a temporal prince.

* Connected with this prediction about a Messiah is one circumstance, that shows that Daniel knew nothing of what he was talking about; and that is, that when predicting that Jerusalem should sometime be destroyed, he says "the end thereof shall be with a *flood*"—whereas (unluckily for inspiration) such happened not to be the fact.

The particulars of his journey from the mount of Olives to Jerusalem, recorded by Matthew (21—1 to 11), Mark (11), Luke (19—28 to 44) and John (12—12 to 15), show that he at that time expected to have been received, as King of the Jews. Matthew says "a very great multitude" attended him; that they spread even their *garments* in the way; that they cut down branches of trees and strewed them in the way, and that they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of DAVID. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Mark says they cried "Blessed be the KINGDOM of our father DAVID, that cometh in the name of the Lord." Luke says they cried "Blessed be the KING that cometh in the name of the Lord." John says that *much people*, that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of *palm-trees*, and *went forth to meet him*, and cried "Hosanna, blessed is the KING of ISRAEL, that cometh in the name of the Lord." Is there here room for the slightest reasonable doubt that this multitude believed him to be a temporal prince, specially sent by God to rule over the Jewish nation? There certainly can be none, justified and authorized as such a belief was, in relation to the Messiah, by the predictions of those whom the Jews supposed to be prophets. The question then arises, how came this multitude, at this time, to believe him to be their temporal king? Why, in this way only, viz: he himself must have directly or indirectly given to their minds the impression that he was to be, or it could not have become so general among them—and if he did either create or sanction that impression, he must himself have expected to be a temporal prince, or he intentionally deceived this multitude. By barely *consenting to be attended* by this great body of men, by these shouts, and these hosannas, and by approaching Jerusalem in this triumphal and kingly manner, he proves that he either expected to have been made a king, or that he practised a deception on the people—for, be it remembered, *he* could not have been ignorant that these demonstrations of loyalty were offered to him, by his attendants, solely because they thought he was about to become their king. John has removed all doubt that they were so offered. He says (12—16) that even "Jesus's disciples understood not these things at the first," that is, at the time, and on the spot, they did not understand that he was to be a *spiritual* king—and if they did not, there is but one answer to the question, what did they understand him to be? But John adds, in substance, that "when Jesus was glorified," they then saw what their conduct had meant, and how they had in reality been paying their homage to a *spiritual* prince under the mistaken apprehension that he was to be an earthly one. The amount of this ridiculous equivocation is, that Jesus took to himself, at this time, the Hosannas which he must have known were intended for another, and trusted to the future, when he should be "glorified," to set the matter right—or, in other words, that, for the time being, he practised a little pious deception, for the glory of God, and the good of that spiritual kingdom, which he was laboring to establish.

If Christians would save the character of Jesus for honesty and plain dealing, they must disclaim for him this miserable trick that John attributes to him, and must acknowledge that he intended to have become a king. All the accounts of this transaction go to show that such was the fact, that he expected to have been received as king at that time; that he rode that ass's colt solely because he knew that "it had been *written*, Behold thy KING cometh, sitting on an ass's colt," and that he supposed the Jews would therefore consider his being mounted on an ass good evidence of his right to be their king.

It is manifest also that he was disappointed in the reception he met with as he approached Jerusalem. Luke says (19—39) the Pharisees told him to rebuke his followers. This incident shows that the Pharisees would not acknowledge him as king. From this occurrence, and from what follows, it seems hardly possible to doubt, that Jesus then saw that he could not be king. He then, as he naturally would if such were the case, (I here, on account of its importance, repeat substantially what I have said in a former chapter), "falls into a lamentation for the fate of the City—*not* for the *souls* of the *Jews*, as he would have been likely to do, if he had intended to be only a spiritual redeemer, but for the fate of the City itself. He virtually says (Luke 19—42 to 44) that if the Jews had but received him as king, their City would have been preserved; but since they had rejected him, the City would be destroyed. He says that "enemies shall compass it around, shall cast a *trench about it*, and keep it in on every side, and lay it even with the ground," &c. This is not the language of a purely spiritual deliverer—it is precisely such language as we might reasonably expect to hear from a man, who wished to make himself the ruler of a people, but who, on being rejected as such, should endeavour to alarm their fears for the safety of their City. Or it is such language as we might reasonably expect to hear from a man so deluded as to imagine that God had specially appointed him to be the deliverer of a people, and the preserver of a City. Such an one, on finding that he would not be accepted as king, would naturally infer, that inasmuch as the deliverer, whom God had appointed to save the city, had been rejected, the city would of course be destroyed."

In these facts too is to be found the secret of the prediction, that he made *soon after*, (Mat. 23—37 to 39, and c. 24—Mark 13—Luke 21), respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, and which has been regarded as wonderful evidence of his power of prophecy. How wonderful the evidence is, here clearly appears. The fact, that Jerusalem was afterwards destroyed, has nothing to do with the prediction; because we can see the grounds, and probably the only grounds, on which he *formed his opinion* that it would be destroyed—grounds *sufficient* to lead

such a man, as I have supposed him to be, to believe that it would be destroyed, or to predict that it would, whether he thought so or not—and we are not to suppose him possessed of the power of prophecy, when his language can be accounted for without such a supposition.

But to return to the inquiry—did Jesus ever attempt to make himself king of the Jews? Another important item of testimony to prove this fact, is, that it was very soon after this triumphal ride from the Mount of Olives, to Jerusalem, that he was apprehended and crucified, and the universal charge against him then was, that he had set himself up to be King of the Jews.

As the *remaining* evidence of his design to make himself king of the Jews, has probably been sufficiently set forth in the former chapter on the nature and character of Jesus, it need not here be repeated.

Perhaps some persons may think it rather extraordinary that a man like Jesus should have conceived such a design as that of making himself a king. But if such persons look at Josephus (Book 2d—Chap. 13, &c. &c.) and at Newton on the Prophecies, Chap. 19,—they will find that, about the time of Jesus, characters very much like him, were no great novelties among the Jews.

If these views are correct, Jesus did not, although he labored to do so, answer the prediction concerning a Messiah, viz: that he was to be a temporal king—but was simply a deluded or dishonest man, like many others, who set up similar pretensions, and all his talk about being "sent of God," &c., was but the insane gibberish of a deluded fanatic, or the knavish pretences of an impostor.

But supposing the predicted Messiah to have been intended only as a spiritual prince—even then Jesus does not answer the description. This Messiah was to be "the glory of God's people Israel." He was "to save God's people from their sins." By "God's people," as then understood by the authors of the Bible, were meant the Jews. Jesus also himself virtually predicted that he should redeem the Jews, for he appointed his disciples in number corresponding with the number of the original tribes of Jews, and he also promised to these twelve disciples that they should sit (Christians must say, *in heaven*, although he at the time probably meant on earth) on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. He, by these acts, and by his whole conduct, showed that he expected to have redeemed the Jews. But none of these predictions or expectations have been fulfilled. Some Christians believe that the Jews will sometime be converted to Christianity—but where is the foundation for such a belief? Jesus can never answer the description given of the Messiah any better than he did while on earth, and therefore there is no reason why the Jews should ever believe him to have been the Messiah. Even if we suppose that the Jews, at the time when Jesus was alive, were mistaken as to his character, still, if eighteen centuries do not afford a sufficient time for them to discover their mistake, how long a time will probably be necessary?

But, further, if a Messiah were necessary to redeem the Jews, was it not just as important to redeem those Jews who have died during the last eighteen centuries, as to redeem any that may live hereafter?

Since the time of Jesus about sixty generations of Jews have died, *without being redeemed*, as believers must say; and yet these same believers virtually say, that if the Jews should hereafter be converted to Christianity, Jesus will then *fairly* answer the description of that Messiah who was to be the Saviour of the Jewish nation. Every generation is a nation of itself, and if Messiah was not to save either of the first sixty nations of Jews that should succeed him, the prophet ought to have been more explicit in designating *what nation* of Jews he would save.

To say that Jesus *would* have saved the Jews, if they would but have received him, is no answer to the objection. If a man predict that a certain event will come to pass, he virtually predicts that every *necessary intermediate* event will also happen. And if a supposed prophet predicted that a Messiah should redeem the Jews, such a prediction was equivalent to one that they *would* believe on him—and if they did not believe on him—no matter for what reason—the prediction then failed as essentially as if no pretended Messiah had ever offered to save them.

Jesus, then, did not come in the same character, (of a temporal prince) that it was predicted Messiah would come in;—nor has he been received by that nation, who, it was predicted, would receive the Messiah. We therefore have no authority, on the ground of prophecy, for believing that he was the expected Messiah; on the contrary, we have much express authority for believing that he was no Messiah at all.

The remaining prediction relating to a Messiah, which was to be noticed, is, that he was to be of the family of Jesse, and a Son of David. Matthew (1) and Luke (3) have attempted to show that Jesus was a descendant of David—and how have they attempted to show it? Why, solely by pretending to trace the genealogy of Joseph, who, as they both agree, was *not his father*, but simply became the husband of his mother a short time before the birth of Jesus. They might therefore with the same propriety have traced *their own* genealogies, in order to prove that Jesus was a descendant of David, as that of Joseph.

This blunder, it would seem, besides proving that there is not the slightest ground for the pretence that Jesus was a descendant of David, must also be considered as having a slight tendency to show how much those two stupid blockheads knew.

These chroniclers, who, with all good fidelity, did so much for posterity, have also shown, *in attempting to trace the genealogy of Joseph*, an accuracy, a *faithfulness*, and a knowledge of the importance of being exact in all matters of revelation, corresponding to the character of their intellects. Luke makes there to have been forty generations between Joseph and David, while Matthew connects the two by a chain of less than thirty, and running through an almost totally *different* list of names. Even if Joseph had been the acknowledged father of Jesus, a disagreement of this kind would prove that there was no more reason for pretending that Jesus was a descendant of David, than for pretending that he was a descendant of any other Jew, who might be named at random from among those who lived in the times of David.

The necessary falsehood of one or the other, and the probable falsehood of both, of these pretended genealogies, would tend to discredit any but an inspired book.

Let us now examine Jesus's own predictions, and see how *he* sustained the character of a prophet.

His only important predictions, that I have discovered, are included in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and in the last three verses of the preceding chapter. Mark also in his thirteenth, and Luke in his twenty-first chapter, have recorded a part of the same predictions, although not so fully as Matthew.

The only one of his predictions, which has been fulfilled, and which is definite and important enough to have any claims to be noticed, is that which foretels the destruction of the temple.

It is evident from the whole of Matthew's record of the prediction, (beginning at the 37th verse of the 23d chapter), that Jesus did not intend to convey the idea that the temple was devoted to any particular destruction, distinct from that which was to befal the City at large. He merely speaks of the destruction of the temple, because they happened to be standing by it, and speaking of it—but he only conveys the idea that it would be involved in the general ruin.

I attempted, on a former page, to account for this prediction, in this way, viz: Jesus had read in the Old Testament, that Messiah was to be a temporal prince, who was to be raised up specially by God for the purpose of saving the Jewish nation, perhaps from their sins, but especially from their enemies, and he inferred, as he reasonably might from these premises, that some great temporal danger threatened the nation, and that an extraordinary deliverer was necessary to save them from this danger. He believed himself to be, or dishonestly wished to make others believe him to be, this Messiah, this appointed deliverer and king. When then he found himself *rejected* by this nation, whom he supposed, or dishonestly pretended, that he was to have saved, he inferred as a matter of course, or threatened as a matter of policy, that the calamity would come upon them. He would also, in such a case, naturally infer, if honest, or threaten, if dishonest, that this calamity should come *soon*, and therefore he ventured to predict that it would come in the course of one generation.

The last three verses of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew tend strongly to confirm this view. The language of Jesus, as there recorded, evidently means this. "O! Jerusalem, I would have protected thy children as a hen protects her chickens under her wings, *but they would not suffer me to do it*—now therefore their house (homes, or possibly temple) shall become desolate, for I say unto you they shall not see their deliverer, until they will receive the one that was sent to them by the Lord (to wit: myself").

If such be a correct view of his thoughts, and a fair interpretation of his language, the question is at an end, for here we see sufficient causes to induce a man like him to make such a prediction—and we are not to suppose him a prophet, if we can account for his language in any other way, because it is unphilosophical to attribute, to supernatural causes, things that might have been naturally produced.

But beside the reasonableness, and the manifest probability of the above supposition, there are one or two other circumstances, that corroborate its truth. One is, that but a short time before this prediction was made, (as appears by the order in which the two events are recorded both by Matthew, Mark and Luke), and *immediately after* his triumphal ride from the mount of Olives to Jerusalem, and his (unquestionable) rejection as king by the Pharisees and principal men of the Jews, he, apparently in the midst of the disappointment or chagrin occasioned by that rejection, uttered a prediction or threat almost precisely similar to the one we have now been considering, (Luke 19—39 to 44).

Another circumstance tending most satisfactorily to confirm the above view of this matter, is that he could not *fix the time when* the temple should be destroyed. He only ventured to say that it would be in the course of that generation, but expressly told his disciples (Mark 13—32) that he *did not know* either the day or the hour when the event would happen.

If he had the power of foreseeing future events, why could he not have known the *time* of the occurrence, as well as the occurrence itself?

Let us now look at some of his predictions, that were *not* fulfilled.

He predicted (Mat. 24—3, &c.) that "the end of the world" should come in the course of that generation. But here we are met by the reply, that he did not *mean* that the end of the world itself would come, or, in other words, that he said what he did not mean, (a practice, to which, according to modern Christians, he was very much addicted). But if he did not mean what he said, what did he mean? "I don't know," says the Christian, "but I think he must

have meant this, or if he did not, *perhaps* he meant that—but I am *sure* he could not have meant the *end of the world*, because if he had, the end of the world would have surely come." This logic is so satisfactory, that I might perhaps despair of convincing a believer on this point, were there no *external* evidence tending to prove that Jesus, in this particular case, meant as he said. It therefore very fortunately happens that such evidence is to be found. For example,—*he had told his disciples the same thing before.* In Matthew 16—28, he holds to them this solemn and unequivocal language, "verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

We have also further evidence that the twelve understood him to mean the end of the world, and what *they* understood him to mean, Christians cannot deny to be his true meaning. Peter declares (Acts 2—16 and 17) on the day of Pentecost, that the conduct, which the apostles had there exhibited, was that, which it had been predicted by Joel, should happen "in the *last* days." Peter also, in his first epistle 4—7, says, "the end of all things is at hand." Paul also (1 Thess. 4—15 to 17) speaks of Christ's coming as an event, that was to take place during the *lifetime* of some of those whom he was addressing. John also (Rev. 1), speaks of it as an event near at hand.

Jesus also said that the time of the destruction of the temple should be the time of *his* coming, (Mat. 24—3, &c). It is manifest from this circumstance too that he supposed the end of the world, and the destruction of the temple would happen at one and the same time, for he would not, of course, have fixed the time of his coming before the end of the world.

It was *natural* also that he should suppose the end of the world and the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem would happen at the same time, because both the temple and the city were esteemed sacred, and as under the special protection of God, and it was therefore natural for those, who believed thus, to suppose that God would not permit *them* to be destroyed *before* the rest of the world.

And here too we find another false prediction, viz: in relation to the time of his coming. He has here left no doubt of his meaning, for he particularly described the *manner* of his coming—and this manner is just such as we might reasonably suppose a deluded man would picture in his imagination, or an impostor conjure up to impose upon the miserable dupes who were his followers. He said (Mat. 24—30 and 31) that "all the tribes of the earth should *see* him, coming in the *clouds of heaven*, with power and great glory." And, said he, "he shall send his angels with a *great sound of a trumpet*, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

That his disciples understood this prediction as one that was to be fulfilled *literally*, is sufficiently proved by Paul's declaration before referred to, (1 Thess. 4—15 to 17), where he says explicitly that "the Lord *himself* shall descend from heaven *with a shout*, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then *we*, which are alive, and remain, *shall be caught up* together with them in the *clouds*, to *meet* the Lord, in the *air*."

His predicting also that he should "gather his elect" at the time of the destruction of the temple, shows that he intended to say that the end of the world would then come. But he has never thus come to gather his elect, and this is the third false prediction.

There is still a fourth. He said (Mat. 24—14) that before these occurrences should happen, "this gospel of the kingdom should be preached in all nations, and to this declaration, as well as to the others, he adds this sweeping clause, that "this generation shall not pass till *all* these things be fulfilled." None pretend that in the course of that generation his gospel was preached in all nations. The most that is pretended, is, that some one or other of his apostles preached in all the *principal* nations with which *they* were *acquainted.* But the prediction was that it *should* be preached in *all* nations, and if it were not so preached, the prediction failed, let the cause of the system's not being preached, be what it may. Jesus himself was probably as ignorant of what nations there were in the world as his apostles, for he gave them no directions unless this general one, to preach every where.

But not only the *letter* of this prediction failed, but the *spirit* of it also failed even in relation to those countries that were known and visited by the apostles. The great mass of men in those countries, during that generation, had no proper opportunity to hear the doctrines of the apostles, to learn the character of their system, and to judge of its truth. A great portion probably, so general was the ignorance that prevailed, did not, for the first forty years after the death of Jesus, know any thing of consequence respecting him. The apostles just set foot, as it were, in various countries, but the mere setting foot in a country did not spread a general and full knowledge of Christianity throughout that country—yet it ought so to have done in order to fulfil the spirit of this prediction. Jesus undoubtedly meant, that within the period mentioned, his religion should be made so universally known, that all, who would, might have an opportunity to embrace it, and be saved.

Here then are four several predictions, viz: that the end of the world would come—that he himself would come *visibly* in the clouds of heaven—that his angels should gather his elect from the four winds,—and, that his gospel should be preached in all the nations of the earth, in the course of the then present generation—all of which predictions proved false nearly eighteen centuries ago.

There is no room for any quibble on his language, or for pretending that these predictions were carelessly or thoughtlessly made. After having described the events in plain and unambiguous terms, he adds (Mat. 24—34) "verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." He goes still farther, and follows even this declaration with one of the most solemn asseverations that man could utter. Says he (Mat. 24—35) "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall *not* pass away."

This dishonest or infatuated man was predicting events, of the occurrence of which he knew nothing, for time has *proved* that those various predictions, and that solemn asseveration were falsehoods.

These predictions of Jesus, in relation to his gospel's being preached throughout the world, his coming, his gathering, his elect, &c., have thus far been considered as having reference to events of a *religious* character, and as such have been shown to be false. But there is another and more probable interpretation to be given to them, and that is, that they refer to a *second attempt*, which he then had in contemplation, to make himself king of the Jews.

There are many circumstances tending strongly to confirm this view. One is, that this prediction, that he should come again, was made very soon after he had once attempted to get himself accepted as king of the Jews, and had failed. It is natural that he should have it in his mind to make another effort, if he saw any possibility of his doing it with better prospects of success. And as he was looking forward to a time when the nation would be in danger from their enemies, it is natural that he should suppose that such a season of peril and calamity would be a favorable one for the triumph of his scheme.

A great part of his account (Mat. 24) of the scenes that were to precede his coming, indicate that he expected only a *temporary calamity* to the *Jewish nation*, and that the declaration ascribed to him, that the "end of the world" was then to come, must be a misrepresentation.

His prediction that he should come "in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," (if indeed he made such an one—which Deists are not at all bound to believe), is not inconsistent with the supposition that he intended to come as a temporal deliverer; for such a pretension was hardly more extravagant than ought to have been expected from such a man; nor was it too extravagant to gain credit among his disciples; and it was indispensably necessary that he should hold out a *very* extravagant expectation of some sort in order to keep up the delusion and faith of his ignorant followers until his arrival. Besides, he said that his competitors (whom he called "false Christs") "should show great signs and wonders," and it was necessary that he should represent that the pageantry of *his* coming would be still more marvellous than that of theirs, otherwise he could not have sustained his own reputation, in the eyes of his disciples, for being the true Messiah. He must also promise something corresponding with the *dignity* of a Messiah, else his disciples would not have cared to wait for *him*, when they should be in the way of having so many opportunities and inducements, as he expected they would have, to join the ranks of other pretended Messiahs. Finally, a man, who, like Jesus, could have the hardihood to assert, without ever putting any thing of that kind to the test of experiment, that he could rebuild the temple of Jerusalem in three days, (John 2—19), or that if he were but to call upon his father, the Almighty, he should immediately receive from him more than *twelve legions of angels* to protect his person, (Mat. 26—53), or that his followers, if they had faith, could remove mountains, and cast them into the sea, (Mark 11—23), would not be very likely, particularly when, as in this case, his circumstances required a large story of some kind, to stick at telling the foolish dupes, that followed him, and were ready to swallow any thing from his lips, that he should sometime make a second appearance among them, and should then come in the clouds of heaven, &c.—especially if he could tell them, as he did in this instance, that it might be many years before the thing would happen.

Another circumstance worthy of especial notice, is, that (Mat. 23—37 to 39) a short time before his prediction in relation to a second coming, after having declared how willingly he would have protected the people of Jerusalem, and how they would not permit him to do it, he proceeded to say that calamity should come upon them, and that "they should not *see him thenceforth*, until they should say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." What is the meaning of such language as this, unless it be that he had resolved to *absent himself*, until the nation should find itself so involved in danger that they would receive him *gladly* as their deliverer? Here then is an express intimation that he expected, at a future time, to come and be *received* as the temporal deliverer of the nation Now when was this second coming as a temporal deliverer to be, unless it were at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, as spoken of in the very next chapter, when he should come with power and great glory?

He tells his disciples also (Mat. 24—14) that before the time of his next coming, "this gospel of the *kingdom* shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations." It was expected by the Jews that under the reign of their Messiah. their nation would acquire great temporal splendor, and great importance and high rank among the nations of the earth, and that people from all nations would flock together at Jerusalem. What then did Jesus mean, when he said that "this gospel of *the kingdom* should be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations," before the time of his coming? Did he not mean that his *project of an earthly kingdom*, or the good news of the earthly kingdom, which he designed to establish should be so proclaimed abroad, that all, who should desire it, might, at the time of his coming to take

the throne, assemble and become subjects of his government? The terms used indicate most strikingly that such was his meaning. He does not say merely *his gospel*, nor does he say his *spiritual* gospel, nor his system of religion, nor the gospel of a future world; but he says "this gospel of the *kingdom*." Besides, we ought to suppose that when he spoke of *the* kingdom, he alluded to some particular kingdom, with the idea of which his disciples were familiar—and yet, with the idea of what kingdom were they then familiar, except the kingdom of their expected Messiah, which, as they all understood, was to be an earthly one? They had, at that time, as Christians themselves admit, never dreamed of his kingdom being an heavenly one.

He said also (Mat. 24—31) that his angels* "should gather together his *elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Now who were these "elect," that were to be "gathered *together*," from the four winds? Why, it is clear that they were *living men*, and that they were to be gathered together at some place *on the earth;* for after describing the tribulation that should come upon Jerusalem as being so great, that unless the duration of it should be shortened, no "*flesh* should be saved," he adds (22d verse) that "for the *elect's* sake those days shall be shortened"—that is, this time of calamity shall be shortened that the *elect* may not *die* in consequence of it. If therefore the "elect" were to be exposed to the distress attending the destruction of Jerusalem, and the time of that distress was to be shortened that *they* might be saved from death, and if they were to be thus saved, they of course were living men. It is perfectly absurd to speak of any others, than men living on the earth, being saved from death at the sacking of a city. Now, these "elect," who were to be saved at the destruction of Jerusalem, were undoubtedly a *part* of those "elect," who were to be "gathered together" immediately afterwards, at the time of his coming; and those, that were to be gathered from other nations, or "from the four winds," were doubtless of the same kind of "elect," that is, living men.

Considering it settled, therefore, that these elect were *living men*, and that they were to be gathered together *on the earth*, what could be the object of Jesus in thus gathering them together, unless it were to compose his kingdom? He, of course, would not wish to carry these living men's bodies to heaven, and if he wished to carry their souls there, it probably would not be absolutely necessary to "gather them together" for that purpose—much less to gather their living bodies together, as it appears that he intended to do.

That the Jews expected that, under the reign of their Messiah, people would be gathered from all nations to compose his kingdom, the following passages, selected from the many of similar import in the Old Testament, are abundant evidence.

Isaiah 27—13. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come, which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcast in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Genesis 49—10. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh (Messiah) come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Isaiah 2—2. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Isaiah 11—10. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek.

Isaiah 11—12. And He (the Lord) shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Isaiah 55—4 and 5. Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee.

Is. 60—10, 11 and 12. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee.

Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.

If these passages were designed as predictions that Jerusalem was to be built up, as a *temporal* kingdom, under the reign of the Messiah, by accessions from foreign nations, we have here additional evidence that Jesus, when he predicted that his angels should gather his elect from the four winds, had in his mind the building up of a temporal kingdom; because he evidently had always intended to be guided by, and had always pretended to be destined to fulfil, the predictions which had been made concerning a Messiah.

Another most important fact, and one which appears to me decisive evidence that Jesus, at his second coming, designed but to renew his attempts to make himself king of the Jews, is, that he expected to have *competitors*, (Mat. 24—23 to 28). It is admitted and asserted by Christians, and proved by history, that these pretended Messiahs, whom Jesus called "false Christs," were men who attempted to obtain the temporal government of the Jews. Yet

* Such angels probably as he referred to when he said he could call upon his father, and he would give him more than twelve legions of angels to protect him, (Mat. 26—53).

these are the men, against whose pretensions Jesus found it necessary, in the strongest manner, to warn his disciples, lest they, mistaking one of these for himself, or for the true Messiah, should espouse the cause of a wrong one. The question here arises, whether a man, who is undisguisedly engaged in endeavoring to acquire temporal power, so nearly resembles a genuine Son of God and spiritual Saviour, that men, who should once have been intimately acquainted with the latter, would not afterwards be able, without difficulty, to distinguish between him and the former? A further question also arises, viz: whether men must not have the same object in pursuit, in order to be such rivals to each other?

Look now, but for a moment, at the monstrous absurdity involved in the interpretation, that must be given to this affair by Christians. They must admit that Jesus, at the very time when he made these predictions in relation to his second coming, must have foreseen his *crucifixion*, *resurrection* and *ascension;* and that he must also have known that these events would open to the understandings of his disciples (what until then they are said never to have understood) the spiritual nature of his kingdom. He must have known that as soon as these events should have happened, all their former misapprehensions as to the nature of his reign would immediately vanish; that all, that they had before misunderstood, would then become to their minds perfectly clear and certain; that they would then know, with the most absolute knowledge, that he never had designed to be, and never would be, an earthly deliverer or king; that Messiah was never to have been an earthly monarch; but that *he* was the genuine Messiah, and that his kingdom was solely spiritual, and he a purely moral deliverer, redeemer or saviour. Christians must say also that at this time, (that is, at the time of making these predictions), Jesus also knew that in a few years these very disciples would have, in a measure, established a religion, bearing his name. And yet these same Christians must say further, that although he foresaw all these things, he yet was troubled with fears lest these disciples, after they should have come to all this light, after they should be possessed of all this certain knowledge as to his character and the nature of his kingdom, and even after they should have witnessed his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, and should have labored years for the establishment of his religion, might yet *forget* all these things, and be deceived by some one of those vagabond leaders (for such, or little better than such, these false Christs were), of insurgent bands of Jews, into the belief that such leader, and *not* Jesus, was the Christ; that they might be so hoaxed as to espouse the cause of some one who should be attempting to become a *temporal* king; might be cheated into the delusion that such an one was the real Messiah instead of himself; and might be duped into the conviction that some one, who should be notoriously aiming at an earthly throne, was the "Sent of God," who was destined to fulfil all that was expected to be done by their *spiritual* Saviour, Messiah, Redeemer, &c., in relation to the *spiritual* redemption of the human race.

When before was such a bundle of absurdities ever offered to the credulity of men?

But if we suppose that Jesus designed only to absent himself for a while, (as he intimated that he intended to do, when he said (Mat. 23—37 to 39) that the people of Jerusalem should not see him again until they would be glad to receive him), and then to come again and renew his attempt to make himself king of the Jews, his conduct in warning his disciples against being enticed, in the mean time, into the train of the other pretended kings, is all perfectly explained; because it is perfectly natural, that under such circumstances, he should have fears that before his return, his followers might suspect, either that he would not return at all, or that he was not the genuine Messiah, and might therefore abandon their hopes of him, and be persuaded to attach themselves to some of his rivals.

CHAPTER V.

The Resurrection.

We come now to the question of the resurrection of Jesus—the last of those alleged supernatural events, the truth of which it is necessary to inquire into.

Two solutions of this occurrence may be given, either of which, I apprehend, will be a sufficient answer to all the evidence tending to prove a real return from death to life.

The first, and perhaps most probable solution is, that the person seen by the disciples was really Jesus, but that he had never been actually dead.

The instances have been numerous, where criminals, who have submitted to all the forms of execution, and have been supposed to have died as really as any others, have afterwards been found alive. The cases are also, as it were, of daily occurrence, where soldiers wounded in battle, or persons sick of some common disease, have apparently died, and have afterwards returned to full life. Now what does the circumstance of their being thus afterwards alive, prove? Why, it proves that the apparent death was only a temporary suspension of animation, and that they have never been really dead. It proves those facts positively, and it proves nothing more. Now will any man say that, in the case of Jesus, a supernatural

event is proved by evidence, which, in other cases, proves only a natural one? Or that, in his case, we are to presume an event to have been supernatural, when there have been millions of natural ones precisely like it? If not, then he must admit, that the re-appearance of Jesus, is, of itself, positive proof that he had never been dead.

But perhaps it will be said that the prediction of Jesus before his crucifixion, that, in three days after that event, he should rise from the dead, and the fact that, in three days he was found alive, furnish too extraordinary a coincidence to be attributed to any natural cause. One answer to this objection is, that there is no impossibility of such an event's taking place *naturally*, and that any thing, which is naturally *possible*, is in the highest degree probable, in comparison with an event, that is *naturally* impossible. Another answer is, that he did not rise in *just* three days, as he ought to have done to have properly fulfilled such a prediction. He died (or was supposed to die) about three o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, and he left the tomb at least as soon as sometime in the course of Saturday night; whereas he ought to have remained in it until the middle of the afternoon of the next Monday, in order to make the coincidence as remarkable as believers would have it understood to be. The probability is, that the time, during which he was in the tomb, instead of being three days, was even less than half that time. Still another answer to this objection is, *that it is not probable that Jesus ever predicted that he should rise from the dead at all.* His alleged predictions of this kind all appear to have been made in such manner, as that none of his disciples *so understood them*, at the time. When the news first came to them that he was alive, it occasioned the greatest surprise among them. They considered the reports as but "idle tales," (Mark 16—10 to 13. Luke 24—11), "and they believed them not." They appear to have been wholly unprepared for such an occurrence. John also acknowledges (20—9) that *previous* to the resurrection, they had not known "the scripture that he must rise from the dead." But when they find that he is really alive, they brush up their memories, and recal some things, which he had said, and which they now construe to have *meant* that he should rise again, although they had gathered no such idea from them at the time they were uttered. Is it not sufficiently manifest, from these facts, that all his alleged predictions in relation to his resurrection, either were never made at all, or were made in some such language as that in relation to his rebuilding the temple? a prediction, which John, after the re-appearance of Jesus, sagaciously construed to have referred to "the temple of his body," instead of the temple in which they stood when the words were spoken, (John 2—19 to 21).

But it may be asked, if he did not mean to predict his death and resurrection, what did he mean, when he said, at the supper, the evening before he was taken, (John 13—33), "yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me, and whither I go, ye cannot come?" and again (John 14—28) when he said "I go away and come *again* unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the father?" and again (John 16—16) when he said "a little while and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father?" It may be asked, I say, what he meant by these remarks, if he did not mean that he was going to die, and rise again? And it so happens that I have but this poor answer to give, viz: that if he did not mean that he was going to die and rise again, he probably meant something a little more nearly like what he said: and that is, that he was going to be off for a while and then return again. Nothing would be more natural under the circumstances in which he was then placed—he had found that he was in imminent peril of his life—his enemies were on the watch for him—Judas had already left the room to go and disclose to the Chief Priests (as Jesus supposed) where he was; and he saw that it would not do for him to remain there longer. He therefore determined to abscond, as he had sometimes done before, and return again to his disciples when the danger was over. But as he probably considered it unfavorable to secrecy to have a dozen men accompany him, he must give his disciples some reason why it was necessary for him to go alone—he therefore very *judiciously* told them "he was going to the Father."

Now, if Jesus wished to have us believe that he intended, at this time, to predict that he was about to die and rise again on earth, why did he not predict it *plainly*? Why did he not do it in language that his disciples would have *so understood at the time?* Why did he leave this prediction to be tortured, conjured or "glorified," after the events should have happened, out of some remarks, which, when uttered, the disciples understood, and ought to have understood, as having reference to something else? "Undoubtedly for some *wise reason*," will be the believer's wise answer.

I have thought of but one other objection that can be made to the supposition that Jesus had never been dead. That objection rests upon the facts, that, after his re-appearance, he still claimed to be the Messiah. And it may, perhaps, be said, that if he had never been dead, he was *dishonest* in continuing to make these pretensions. One answer to this objection is, that it is a supposable case, and much evidence has already been exhibited tending to show, that he was a dishonest man; and a second answer is, that if he had always been honest in imagining himself to be what he pretended to be, his return to life would naturally appear as wonderful and miraculous to himself, as to his disciples, and would tend to confirm, rather than weaken, the delusion which had previously occupied his mind.

But there is no lack of evidence tending to prove that Jesus did not die, at the time of his crucifixion. Circumstances enough are related, to render it in a high degree probable that,

when he was taken down from the cross, *an intelligent person would not even have supposed him dead.*

In the first place, it does not appear that he received any mortal wounds. Those in his hands and feet, of course, were not; and as respects the one in his side, we know not that it was a dangerous one. It is certain that his apparent death was caused solely by his protracted torture on the cross, because it took place before his side was pierced. It is also certain that, if he died at all, he did not die so soon as the bystanders supposed, because they thought he was dead before his side was pierced; but when that came to be pierced, his blood was still in circulation. (John 19—33 and 34). Now this suspension on the cross appears to be precisely that kind of torture, that would naturally cause fainting, a suspension of animation, and apparent death, before real death. And it is further evident that Jesus was taken down very soon after the first swooning, or indication of death, for Mark says (15—44) that when Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate to get permission to take the body into his care, "Pilate *marvelled* if he were already dead," but being told by the centurion that he was dead, he thereupon gave Joseph permission to take the body, which he would undoubtedly do immediately. Now the fact, that when Joseph came to him, Pilate marvelled that Jesus could have died so soon, is sufficient evidence that he had but just then given signs of death. There can therefore be no reasonable doubt that he was taken down very soon after the first swooning, that was caused by his suspension on the cross. Would any intelligent man now-a-days suppose that a person, in this situation, and at this time, was dead beyond recovery?

Let now the following facts be considered, 1st, that Pilate marvelled at hearing that Jesus had died so soon; 2d, that when *he* was supposed to be dead, those, who were crucified with him, were still alive, (John 19—32 and 33); 3d, that in order to insure the death of those who were crucified, it was customary (and therefore probably considered necessary) to break their legs, and that his legs were not broken; 4th, that he was undoubtedly taken down very soon after the first signs of death; 5th, that he probably received no dangerous wounds; and 6th, that he was not dead at the time his side was pierced, (as is proved by the circulation of his blood), although the people had previously considered him dead; let all these facts be considered, I say, and it appears to me that the evidence is abundant to satisfy any intelligent and reasonable man of the probability that Jesus was not at this time dead; that he was in fact in such a condition, as he would have been likely to recover from, without any artificial aid at all.

But he was not left without artificial means of recovery. The blood-letting, caused by the wound in the side, would naturally tend to revive him. John says also (19—38 to 41) that the body was laid in an open tomb, (by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus), confined by nothing but linen clothes, and that, with it, was wrapped, in the linen clothes, a large quantity of strongly scented gums, viz. myrrh and aloes. The odour of these gums would act as a restorative of considerable power. These circumstances sufficiently account for the restoration of this man from such a condition as I think he has satisfactorily been shewn to have been in.

How next did Jesus escape from the tomb? There are two ways, in which this may have been done. In the first place, he himself may have been able to force open the door, and make his escape alone. In the second place, Joseph and Nicodemus, who had taken so much pains in regard to this body, would not be very likely to let one day and two nights pass away without their going to the tomb to ascertain the condition of its inmate, and if they found him recovered, he had then nothing to do but to walk off; and if they found him still insensible, they had nothing to do but to carry him away, and take the necessary measures to restore him.

But here the Christian will say that neither of these things could have been done, because a watch was set there for the express purpose of preventing any thing of that kind. This matter of the watch must therefore be inquired into. And it so happens that there is abundant evidence to shew that, if there were any watch there, they were asleep.

In the first place, the stone was rolled away from the door, and the door was open. If these acts had been done physically by an angel, as Matthew (28—2) says they were, the watch, if awake, would have been as likely to observe them, when being done, as if they had been done by Jesus himself, or by Joseph and Nicodemus; and the single fact, that they did not see these acts done, alone proves that they were asleep.

But even if Jesus was restored to life supernaturally, he of course walked out at the door, for an angel is represented to have been sent from heaven to open the door and let him out. Now, if the watch had been awake, they would have been just as likely to have discovered Jesus when he came out *then*, as they would if he had recovered naturally, and had then come out alone, or as they would to have detected any one (Joseph and Nicodemus for instance), who should have come and taken the body; but the fact that they did not see him at all when he came out, is alone sufficient evidence that they were asleep.

Again. It was perfectly natural that the watch should sleep. If they saw a corpse safely deposited in a tomb, the door closed, and a stone placed against it, they would not be made very wakeful by any fear, either that the body itself would return to life and make its escape, or that it would be stolen by men, who should know that a watch was near—and it was probably their feeling of security, that made them sleep so soundly that neither the noise of the rolling of the stone, nor the opening of the door, by whomever caused, awaked them.

But Matthew says (28—4) that when Mary came to the sepulchre, an *angel* had rolled

away the stone from the door, and sat upon it, and that "for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as *dead* men."

Few probably will believe that an angel was there, simply because a simple, superstitious and timid woman imagined she saw one—at such a time and place too, where a woman, who believed in angels, would be more likely to see one than at any other. But there is no certainty, I think I may say probability, that she even imagined that she saw one sitting on the stone, for Mark says nothing about her seeing an angel *without* the sepulchre, but says (16—5) that the woman saw a young man clothed in a long white garment *within* the sepulchre; and Luke only says (24—3 & 4) that after they *had entered into* the sepulchre; "*two* men stood by them in shining garments," &c. John says nothing about Mary's seeing an angel at all the first time she went to the sepulchre.

But perhaps the Christian will ask, if there were no angel there, why did these keepers appear "like *dead* men?" Why, for the very good reason that they lay on the ground asleep, as I have supposed them to have done; and this undoubtedly is as far as they did resemble dead men. But Matthew says these "keepers did *shake*," and it may be argued that this could not be if they lay on the ground. To this it may be replied, that neither could they have "become like *dead* men," and yet continued *standing*. The unbeliever has a right to take his choice of these contradictory statements—I therefore take the last, that they "became like dead men," and then account for it by saying that they were asleep. The time when Mary saw these men in this situation was just at dawn of day, Matthew says; (John says (20—1) that the time of Mary's being there was "when it was yet dark"), and that is the time when they would naturally be asleep.

Matthew acknowledges that the watch told the Governor that they had been asleep; but he says that this story was a falsehood, and that the soldiers were bribed by the Chief Priests to tell it. But it is pretty certain that Matthew either manufactured this story, so far as it relates to the falsehood and bribery, or that he adopted it without knowing any thing of its truth—for how could he know that they had not slept? or how could this outcast fisherman, or any of his feather, know any thing about the Chief Priests making a bargain with these soldiers? was he, or such fellows as he, let into their counsels?

The simple declaration of these soldiers is sufficient evidence that they were asleep,—for it is not in human nature that men, in their situation, knowing that Jesus had pretended to be the Messiah, the Son of God, &c., should see an angel come and roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre where he was buried, that they should feel such fear, on account of seeing this angel, as to "shake and become like dead men," and then that they should *all* go away and deny all this, and say that they had been asleep.

Still less, if possible, is it in human nature, that the Chief Priests, who knew what Jesus had claimed to be, when they learned that he had risen from the dead, and knew also, as they then of necessity must, that he was a being not to be controlled or baffled in his designs by them, should think of giving "large money" to these soldiers to hire them to say that the body had been stolen. Men never would have dared do such a thing. But supposing them to have dared to do it, what could they expect to gain by such a fraud? or how long could they expect to conceal it? If they knew that Jesus was alive, they could not but have been assured that the fact would be immediately known; and they must also have been aware that as soon as the fact should have become public, the falsehood of the soldiers would be exposed, and their own knavery in the greatest danger of detection. The absurdity of pretending that men would act thus, under such circumstances, is so gross as to be perfectly disgusting.

I here take it for granted that it has been established, by evidence, which Christians must abide by, that, if there were a watch at this tomb, they were asleep. There is still another subject of inquiry, viz. whether there were any watch at all there? The evidence is very strong tending to shew that there was none.

In the first place, nobody but Matthew says any thing about there being any, and his reputation for truth is decidedly too bad to have any thing improbable, which, if true, would make *for* his cause, believed on the strength of his assertion. He has told too many stories about soldiers being bribed to tell a falsehood, about Chief Priests' bribing them, about the earth quaking, rocks rending, graves opening, dead rising, about sermons on the mount, &c. &c. to be entitled to any mercy when his statements are to be examined, or any credit when those statements are improbable.

Matthew had a strong inducement to make up a story of this kind, if it were false. It appears (28—13 & 15) that, at the time he wrote, it was the current opinion among the Jews that the body was stolen from the tomb in the night. And he knew that this would be the natural inference of people in general, unless something were told by the friends of Jesus to prove that such could not have been the case. He therefore says that there was a guard there. But even when he has said this, he seems to be aware that he has not relieved his case from all embarrassment, and that it is necessary for him to account, in some way, for the fact, that the circumstance of a guard's being there did not satisfy the *Jews*, as well as himself, that the body was not stolen. He could account for this in no way but by charging the soldiers with having told a falsehood, by which the Jews were deceived. He therefore declares that they did tell a falsehood, and in making this declaration, he shews that he himself was a man too dishonest to be trusted, because he certainly could not have known that they

did not sleep. On his own showing, therefore, he, *without* any certain knowledge of the facts in the case, contradicts those who did know them perfectly, and asks us to believe, merely because he says so, that those others were all liars; although he acknowledges that the Jewish nation believed, and continued to believe, that they told the truth. A very modest man truly!

But even when he has accused the soldiers of lying, he has not done all that was necessary to be done. He must, in order to make this story against them believed, show that they had some motive for lying. He therefore makes another charge, which he could not have known to be true, even if it were true, against the Chief Priests, and says that they bribed the soldiers to do it. But even when he has done this, he has not cleared his case of all the difficulty in which it is involved. It is necessary that he should also account for the fact that the soldiers were not *punished* for sleeping, when they had been set as a guard. One falsehood more, if it be but believed, will now make out his case—he therefore represents that the Chief Priests—those wicked Chief Priests, who were full of all manner of iniquity—interfered for these soldiers, according to agreement, and made such representations in their favor (false ones, of course, unless he means to charge the Governor also with corruption) as saved them.

Such is Matthew's story—a story, that might have been valuable to Christianity, were it not that, like many other stories of the same author, it failed to "keep probability in view."

The circumstance that neither Mark, Luke nor John make any mention of the guard, is very strong evidence that there was none; because they must almost necessarily have known that the way, in which the Jews accounted for the absence of the body from the tomb, was by supposing it to have been stolen; and, if they had common sense, they must have known that this supposition was a reasonable one, and that therefore, if there were any facts tending to contradict it, it was immensely important to their cause to state them. Yet they have said not one syllable on the subject. Besides, if there had been a guard there, that of itself was an incident so prominent, one would think, that these men would have been likely to have mentioned it, even if they had not seen its particular importance.

Another ground for believing that there was no watch there, is, that there seems to have been no good reason why there should have been one. The man was *dead*, as they all supposed, and the body had been taken down and given to its friends, and what more was necessary? But Matthew says (27—63 &c.) that the reason assigned by the Chief Priests and Pharisees, who wished to have a guard set, was, that "*they remembered* that Jesus had said that in three days he should rise again." Now this story is perfectly ridiculous, because it is evident that even the disciples, not only had never heard him say plainly that in three days he should rise again, but that they had not even heard him say any thing, which they considered equivalent to such a declaration—how supremely absurd then is it to pretend that others had heard such a statement from him. If then the Chief Priests had never heard any thing about his rising again, the motive, which Matthew says induced them to get a watch set, did not exist; and if that part of the story, that relates to the motive be false, the whole is probably false.

There is still another circumstance, which, in my mind, stamps this story of the watch as a fabrication—and that is, that all the preparations for having the watch set, &c., are said to have been made on the sabbath day, (Mat. 27—62 &c.). There seems to have been an attempt to conceal the fact of this being done on that day, by calling it, instead of the sabbath, "the next day that followed the day of preparation." If the story, instead of running as it does, had run thus, "now, on the sabbath day, the Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate" &c. the improbability would have been so glaring as to be dangerous; a man would notice it at the first glance; but "now, the next day that followed the day of preparation, the Chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate" &c. does not suggest the improbability so readily, and was therefore the better form of expression, in this particular instance, notwithstanding it is awkward and unnatural.

For my part I believe the whole of this story to have been the work of a knave, and probably of a more *modern* knave than Matthew. Some pious priest (before priests had become as honest as they are now) probably saw what was wanting, and attempted to supply it.

One consideration is here worthy of notice, viz. that if there were no watch, it is not improbable that Jesus went, or was carried, from the tomb even sooner than the second night. It is indeed probable even that when Joseph and Nicodemus (who appear to have been more intelligent men than the friends of Jesus generally) had him taken down from the cross, and asked of Pilate the privilege of taking the body into their care, they believed that he could be restored; that their object in seeking to get the body was to restore it; and that, on the very first night, as soon as the women and the other friends of Jesus, whom it would not do to trust with a secret, had gone, and it had become dark, they took measures to recover him. It is evident that the disciples did not go to the tomb on the sabbath day—so that if the body had been absent on that day, they would not have known it. All they knew about the time of the exit of Jesus from the tomb, was, that very early on the second morning he was gone—but of the length of time he had been gone they knew nothing.

If it be true that the individual, seen by the disciples, was really Jesus, his whole course, after his re-appearance, tends to confirm all I have supposed in relation to his natural restoration. Had he actually risen from the dead, he would undoubtedly have shown himself in

the most open manner, so as to have made the fact of his resurrection notorious. But he kept himself timidly concealed from the public eye. He skulked about like a fugitive, who had luckily escaped the clutches of the executioner. He saw none but his friends. Peter says (Acts 10—41) he did not shew himself "to all people," but (only) to his disciples. His first interview even with them was had in the *evening* and within *closed doors*, (John 20—19). Eight days afterwards he met them again, and within *closed doors*, (John 20—26). Perhaps he saw *them* a few times more, but he carefully avoided being seen openly. He lurked about among his former adherents for forty days, and at the end of that time he was among the missing.

It is now incumbent upon those, who maintain that he was supernaturally restored to life, to show, by reasonable evidence, what became of him at the end of these forty days. Those, who believe only that animation was *naturally* restored in him, can easily satisfy themselves as to his fate, by supposing that he was detected and privately slain; that he sought a residence where he might be safe from a second crucifixion; or that he went off with the intention of living concealed for a while, and then returning at a more favorable time to renew his attempt to make himself king of the Jews, and that he died before such an opportunity presented itself. But neither of these suppositions will answer the purposes of those, who maintain that he was *supernaturally* revived. *They* must dispose of him in a more dignified manner. Now, on what evidence can they do it? Matthew and John give no intimation that they ever knew what became of him. Nor do any of the eleven ever speak of having witnessed this miraculous "ascent." Yet Mark and Luke, who are our only authority for believing that he ascended at all, both say (Mark 16—19. Luke 24—50 to 51. Acts 1*) that he did it in presence of his disciples. Now is it to be believed for a moment, that if he had thus ascended into heaven in the presence of his disciples, no one of them would ever have given us his testimony to the fact? or that Matthew and John, who were of the twelve, when they undertook to write biographies of him, would have omitted all allusion to such an event as this, if it had ever happened? The thing is incredible. It would have been better for their case to have omitted the whole of their other accounts of the supposed miracles and wonderful works of Jesus, than to have omitted this single one, for without this, the rest, under the circumstances, are utterly incredible, and good for nothing. There is no excuse for attempting to support a story of this kind on the mere hearsay declarations of Mark and Luke, who could have known nothing of the fact, when the alleged eye-witnesses are silent. The imposition is too gross to deserve the toleration of society for a moment. And that class of men, who dare get their living by palming off this abominable deception upon the understandings of the simple and confiding, have little more excuse for their conduct than that other class of swindlers and cheats, against whom we have laws to protect the community.† The disciples perhaps (as some of their observations indicate) *supposed* that Jesus had gone to heaven, and well they might suppose so, and for these reasons, viz. that they thought that the proper place for him, and perhaps they remembered that he had once before told them that he was going to the Father, and they knew not now where else he could have gone to. (They did not dream that he could *run away*). But they never speak of having *seen* him ascend. Certainly the bare conjectures of these eleven are not to be taken as evidence of his ascension. The believer then is left with a risen Messiah on his hands, whom he has not disposed of, and whom he cannot dispose of, by any reasonable evidence, that can be found in the Bible.

But supposing any one should still say that he *will* nevertheless continue to believe that Jesus went to heaven, let me ask him whether he supposes that the *body* of Jesus went there? that human body, which is supposed to have been prepared solely for him to live in while on the earth? Surely he will not pretend that this flesh and blood, this lump of matter, this corporal system went to the land of souls. What then did become of it, unless it walked slily off one day out of the reach of danger?

Besides, what became of the dress he had on? Did he wear that into the world of spirits? But this is not all. There is, in this story, still another absurdity, gross as any preceding one. The testimony of the witnesses is, that he ascended "up" into heaven. Now, which way from the earth is *up*?

* Luke is said by Christians to have written the Acts.

† Yet it is not that they thus get men's money, that I would oppose the Clergy; although that would be a sufficient reason for opposing them, if there were not other reasons stronger. The waste of money, immense though it be, I consider as among the slightest of the evils attending the existence and support of Christianity. It is because the Clergy, by means of their infamous doctrines, appal, delude and enslave the imaginations of the young; deprive men of their mental liberty, of their judgment, reason and candor; fill their minds with prejudice, and their imaginations with vulgar and disgusting superstitions; rob truth and reason of their power, and resist *totis viribus* their progress whenever they conflict with the vile delusion and imposture, which it is their interest to advocate; and because they thus make men dupes, fools, slaves, cowards, bigots and fanatics, that I would oppose and expose them and their system. It is, in short, because Christianity is nothing but a miserable and disgusting superstition; because its pretended evidences are false, many of them grossly and glaringly false; because the Clergy seem to understand all this, and yet have the audacity to impose upon men by pretending the contrary, and to degrade and govern them by thus imposing upon them, that I would awaken opposition to the Clergy and Christianity.

Where is men's reason, when they talk of the probability of such stuff as this?

The second solution of this alleged resurrection from the dead, supposes Jesus never to have been seen by his disciples after his crucifixion, but that they were duped by some one who pretended to be Jesus. There are some improbabilities attending this solution, yet none of them, I think, will be found to bear any comparison with that of a man's returning to life after he had once died.

The testimony tending to prove that he was seen alive, is but the statements of two men, (Mark and Luke) who do not pretend to have seen him, and of three other men, (Matthew, John and Paul), who say that they did see him.

As the return of the dead to life would be a supernatural event, it is so improbable that it appears little less than ridiculous to regard at all any stories told by men, who do not pretend to have seen the man, and who only relate what they *heard*, probably years afterwards. Few words only will therefore be devoted to the testimony of Mark and Luke. But since Matthew, John and Paul say that they saw him, their testimony will be more particularly examined—although, if the same fact had been related of any person but Jesus, or in any other book than the Bible, it would not be regarded as in the slightest degree probable, whether testified to by two, by ten, or even ten thousand men. If, in the case last supposed, we were not to doubt the *honesty* of the witnesses, we should still disbelieve their testimony, however direct and positive it might be—for we should say, and say it too with the most entire confidence, that they must in some way or another have been mistaken, even though the circumstances had been such as that the witnesses should deem it impossible that they could have been, and such that we could not tell how they were. We should believe that they had seen an individual, who so nearly *resembled* the deceased, that they were in an error as to the identity of the person, or we should say that some delusion had seized on and deceived them.

No possible amount of human testimony could make us believe for a moment, that Mahomet rose from the dead, although the fact were universally believed by his followers. Even if it were said that Mahomet, after his death, was seen alive again and again, daily and hourly for years, by great multitudes who had known him intimately before his death, we could not be made to believe that the individual seen was he. Even if it were said that this individual assumed to be Mahomet; to fill the place, and take the station, which he had occupied; that he conversed about having been dead, and gave a reason for having suffered death; that he had marks about his person that resembled those about the person of Mahomet; still we should not believe; we should say that the man was an impostor; that he had disguised himself so as to resemble Mahomet as nearly as he could, and that he was by this art, deceiving all who credited his pretensions, however numerous and respectable those persons might be.

But this is supposing a much stronger case than that related by the biographers of Jesus. The individual, whom they supposed to be Jesus, did not show himself as such to the multitude, although, if he were really Jesus, and a belief in him as a Saviour were necessary to their future happiness, he would seem to have been bound by the strongest principles of moral obligation to have thus shown himself, that he might have inevitably convinced those who had before been incredulous—and the fact that he did not show himself to the world as the one who had been dead, is very strong evidence of itself that he was not the real Jesus.

This individual was seen by eleven, who had been followers of Jesus, and perhaps also the same individual was seen by three or four other persons, although it is very doubtful whether the person seen by the eleven was the one seen by Mary.

This individual was seen (as John says) by a part of the disciples of Jesus at *three* different times, and unless he were the one whom Mary and the two going to Emmaus saw, we have hardly a shadow of evidence that he was seen and recognised as Jesus, at any other times, or by any other *persons*, after the crucifixion. And yet Luke says (Acts 1—3) that Jesus was on the earth forty days after that event. If he himself were on the earth forty days, where was he, and what was he doing during all this time, that he should be seen not at all by the public, and but three times by his own disciples? If he were the genuine Jesus, a tenth part of this time was sufficient for him to have shown himself so publicly to the Jews, and proved his identity so unequivocally, as that the conversion of the whole Jewish nation would have been the probable result. Yet he did not thus exhibit himself, but left about sixty generations of a whole nation, as believers must say, eternally to perish, merely because they were not convinced that he was the Messiah. Even if he were really the Messiah, and did actually exhibit a disregard of men's happiness so inhuman as he is here represented to have done, a man must have an exceedingly degraded moral taste, or very obtuse moral perceptions, to be capable of feeling any respect for his character.

But let us look more minutely at the evidence.

We are told (Mat. 27—66) that the sepulchre was made sure, the stone placed against the door being sealed, or made fast, and a watch set. The inference, which the believer draws from these facts, is, that no one could have stolen the body without being detected. But the reader will here recollect the evidence, before offered, to prove that, if there were any watch, they were asleep, and also to prove that there was no watch. I shall here take it for granted that that evidence was satisfactory to prove one or the other of those positions. There was then *opportunity* enough to steal this body; and if it were *possible* to steal it, the single fact that

it was absent, is conclusive proof that, if it were dead, it was carried away; because, as long as we can *imagine* a natural way in which this body could be removed, we are not to suppose it to have been supernaturally done.

Let us now look at the evidence of Jesus having been seen by Mary. Matthew says (28—9 & 10) that as Mary Magdalen and the other Mary were going from the sepulchre, Jesus *met* them, and commanded them, saying, "All hail," (precisely as a man, who, on seeing these women coming from the tomb, should infer that they had been followers of Jesus, and should feel disgusted at the thought of their believing that he would rise again,* would have done, if he had wished to impose on them on account of their superstition); that they then came and held him by the feet and worshipped him, and that he then told them to not be afraid, but to go and tell his brethren to go into Galilee, and that they should see him there. Such is Matthew's account of the interview with Mary. Mark's story is somewhat different. He says that the angel, whom he says the women saw *in* the sepulchre, told them to go and tell the disciples that Jesus had gone into Galilee, and that they should see him there. And all that he says about Mary's seeing Jesus, is simply this (16—9) that early in the morning on the first day of the week, "he appeared to her"—but says nothing of the place where he appeared to her, or of what he said to her. Luke's account is still different from either. He says that Mary, *and other women*, went to the sepulchre, and saw *two* angels, but does not say a word about Mary's seeing Jesus at all after his death. John's account is still very materially different from that of either of the other three. He says (20—1 to 18) that Mary went first to the sepulchre, (making no mention of any other women going with her); that she saw the stone rolled away from the door; that she then returned and told this to Peter and John; that they (Peter and John) then went to the sepulchre, and saw the grave clothes &c. and then went away, (not having seen Jesus); but that *after* they (Peter and John) *had gone*, Mary remained behind at the sepulchre weeping; that she then looked into the sepulchre, and saw two angels, in a different position from that represented by Luke, viz. sitting one at the head and the other at the feet where the body had lain; that as she turned herself back from this sight, she saw a man whom she *did not know*, but whom she *supposed* to be the *gardener;* that this supposed gardener asked her why she wept, and whom she sought; that she answered him in a manner that indicated that she had been a believer in Jesus; that this supposed gardener then said to her "Mary;" that at the utterance of this single word she believed the man to be Jesus, (although she had seen him before, and had spoken to him, and he to her, *without her knowing him*); that she then addressed him in a manner that showed that she thought him to be Jesus; that he then, (probably to impose on her, and see how he could keep up and continue the delusion which he saw her superstition and her then excited imagination had led her into) said to her (assuming to be Jesus) "*touch me not!* for I am not yet ascended to my father! but go to my brethren, and say unto them I ascend unto my father and your father, to my God and your God." And here ended the interview.

If John's story stood alone, and uncontradicted, it contains enough to show that there was no Jesus there. If there were, why did he not show himself to Peter and John, instead of Mary alone? Why did not Mary know him at first? Why did he not suffer her to touch him? How did it happen that he had not as yet been to his father? He had told his disciples, (John 14—28), "I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto my father." And yet John represents him as telling Mary, *after* his supposed resurrection, that he had not yet been to his father. Where, then, if he were Jesus, had he been during that time which he had allotted to go to the Father?

Mary's mistake in supposing this man to be Jesus, is easily accounted for. She was an exceedingly simple and superstitious woman, as is proved by the facts that she supposed Jesus had cast out of her seven devils, (Mark 16—9) and that she imagined she saw angels at the sepulchre. She would naturally, at such a time and place, be in the greatest trepidation of mind, and her imagination would be filled with superstitious fancies. When therefore the man addressed her by her own name, and doubtlessly in a tone a little more emphatic or authoritative than he had before used, it is not at all strange that she should at the moment imagine him to be Jesus, and address him as such. He then, seeing her simplicity and delusion, took advantage of her state of mind to dupe her farther, and told her not to touch him, &c. Here the interview closed before she had had time to recover her self-possession, and discover her mistake.

But the stories of all are so dissimilar, and in some of the most, if not the only, important particulars, so inconsistent with each other, that we cannot determine how much or how little of either may be true, or how much of all may be false: but we may safely infer from either alone, or from all together, that she really saw no Jesus there. We are laid under the stronger necessity of coming to this conclusion by the circumstance that the apostles themselves did not, at the time, believe her story, (Mark 16—10 & 11—Luke 24—10 & 11) but considered it an "idle tale."

The next time that he is said to have been seen, was when two, who had been his followers, were going to Emmaus. Luke says (24—13 to 31) that Jesus, on the *same* day that he

* I here admit, for the sake of the argument, that Jesus did predict that he should rise again, and that this fact was known abroad, as Matthew (27—63) represents it to have been.

rose from the dead, fell into the company of these two men, and conversed with them on the way, and yet that during all this time they did not know him. Luke accounts for the fact that they did not know him, by saying that "their eyes were (miraculously) holden that they should not know him." But to perform a miracle to *prevent* an individual from being recognised, would be a singular way of making it manifest that that individual had risen from the dead. Be that as it may, this man walked with them, and they told him that they had been believers in Jesus. And furthermore they told him that certain women had, that morning, been to the sepulchre, that the body was missing, and that the women said they had seen angels, who told them that Jesus was alive. The supposed Jesus must have by this time discovered what sort of persons he was talking with. He must have seen that they were strongly inclined to believe that Jesus really was alive, and thus he must have been satisfied that they could easily be imposed upon. He therefore attempts it, and in order to bring their minds into such a state as to be easily duped by any artifice he might choose to adopt, he tries to convince them *entirely* that Jesus was alive, by attempting to show from their scriptures that "Christ ought to have died," (and of course to rise again). Before they had reached the place where the two were to stop, he had undoubtedly brought them to believe that the story of the women was true, and that Jesus was really alive. They were then ready to be caught by his trick, which was this, viz. after they had set down to eat, he took bread, "and blessed it, (in the maner of Jesus) and brake, and gave to them." The result was such as might have been expected, viz. "their eyes were opened, and they knew him." *His* conduct was then such as might be expected, viz. "he vanished out of their sight."

Mark tells the story more briefly. He merely says (16—12 & 13) "and after that, he appeared, *in another form*, unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue—neither believed they them." And well they might not believe them, and well may we not believe them, for if he appeared "in another form," how could the witnesses themselves know that it was he?

Mark and Luke, who were *not* of the twelve, tell these stories, but Matthew and John, who *were* of the twelve, say nothing about the matter—which circumstance is pretty good evidence that they always supposed there was some deception or mistake in it.

Another circumstance, which renders it probable that this individual was deceiving these simple men, is, that it is difficult, if not actually impossible, to conceive of any reason, that he could have had, if he were Jesus, for not wishing to be known by them at the first.

Still another circumstance, of the same strong character, is the *language*, which he employed to bring them to believe that Jesus was alive. He even went so far as to call them "fools," (language not very well becoming a Saviour), on account of their backwardness to believe the strange stories they had heard. If he had commended their good sense in not believing them, he would have shown himself a man of more judgment or more honesty. But such language as he used, when it comes from a superior, is often, with simple men, who doubt their own capacity to judge, the most persuasive of all arguments.

Although neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke (in his gospel*) speak of Jesus's being seen but once by his immediate disciples after his death, yet John says that he was seen by a *part* of them at *three* different times. Let us see whether it were so.

I have before said that no number of witnesses, however respectable themselves, and however direct and positive their testimony, would be sufficient to convince us that any man but Jesus ever rose from the dead. Although they were to testify to circumstances, which we should be unable to account for in any other way than by supposing the man to have risen from the dead, still we should believe, we should *know*, as absolutely as we can know any thing, that there was a mistake or a deception somewhere. In these three cases, related by John, of Jesus's being seen by his disciples, there is abundant room for mistakes and deception.

Of those numerous pretended Messiahs, who were about in the days of Jesus, it was perfectly natural that some one should seek to avail himself of the notoriety which Jesus had acquired, and of the additional notoriety that might be acquired by assuming his name, and pretending to have risen from the dead. Such an one, knowing the superstitious character of these disciples, would see, that if he could disguise himself so as to resemble in any degree the person of Jesus, he could pass himself off to his disciples as him. This too would be an easy matter for him to accomplish, for they were so superstitious, and so ready and eager to believe any thing marvellous in relation to Jesus, that if they were to see one whose looks or dress did but remind them of him, they could, by persuasion and the power of their imaginations, be brought to believe what they must have so earnestly desired to believe, viz: that the individual was really Jesus. If such were the motives, that governed the one, who, at three different interviews, assumed to be Jesus, he then probably found that it would be impossible longer to keep up the deception, and never attempted it again.

There is a different motive that might have induced some one to attempt this deception. The credulity and ignorance of these simple fishermen must have been well known among the

* In the Acts (1st c.), (if he were the author of the Acts as he is generally supposed to have been) he represents that Jesus was seen many times—but he was not one of the twelve, and what he *heard* is good for nothing as testimony.

more enlightened part of the community. If some one, after having witnessed the delusion which had led them on before the death of Jesus, should, from a mere waggish curiosity to learn the extent to which they might be still further duped, disguise himself so as to resemble Jesus so far as to recal him to their minds when they should see him, and then, taking advantage of their flurried imaginations, should stoutly declare himself to be Jesus, the deception, with such men, would certainly succeed.

It appears that the individual, who had passed himself off as Jesus with the two going to Emmaus, was the same who afterwards appeared to the disciples, because Mark says (16—14) that he upbraided the eleven for not believing those, who had said that they had seen him. If then the one, who went to Emmaus, was an impostor, the one, whom the eleven saw, was also—and probably his success in duping the two induced him to try the same experiment with the eleven.

Very little disguise would be sufficient for his purpose—because the eleven were well prepared, by the stories of the women, and of the two, to believe that Jesus was alive. The success of the artifice, at the first interview, was aided also by other circumstances. The time chosen was the most favorable for the plot that could have been selected, viz: evening, (John 20—19). The *place* was favorable, for the *doors* were *shut*. The state of their minds, in other respects than the one above mentioned, was favorable, for they had assembled "*through fear of the Jews*," and their thoughts were undoubtedly engrossed by the idea of his being alive—and they were undoubtedly querying with each other whether he *were* alive; and probably nearly all had come to the conclusion that he actually was. In the midst of this state of things the man enters, and says, solemnly, "Peace be unto you,"—the best language he could have chosen to impress their imaginations. Soon he *repeats*, "Peace be unto you—as my father hath sent me, even so send I you." Then he "*breathed on them!* and said receive ye the Holy Ghost." What means such disgusting mummery, unless it were a *studied imposition?* *Breathing* on them! He then closes the interview by one of the most arrant pieces of humbug that was ever attempted, viz: by pretending to confer on them power to *forgive sins!** a pretence which probably, at the present day, hardly deceives a single Protestant in all Christendom.

To proceed with the evidence. John says he showed unto them his hands and his side. John would have us believe, from this language, that the disciples plainly saw the scars or wounds; yet he does not say absolutely that they did; and if they only saw his hands and his side, without any scars or wounds, the prevarication would hardly be more palpable than the one which John was convicted of on a preceding page. But even the story, that he offered to show them his scars, is very improbable for several reasons,—such as, in the first place, that it is not likely that it was necessary, for they would generally believe him readily enough without seeing them. In the second place, if he were to show them his *hands*, he would not be likely to show them his side—the real Jesus would certainly be able to prove his identity, to men so ready to believe as they were, without submitting to so critical an examination. A third reason is, that it was probably so dark that they could not have seen the scars even if there were any—for John says it was in the evening, and that the doors were shut *through fear of the Jews*. If they were so fearful of being discovered by the Jews, they would not be likely to have light enough in the room to enable them to detect a scar on a man's hand.

Eight days after this affair, John says (20—26) they were together, probably in the same place, for he says they were "within," and also that the doors were shut, as before. The individual comes again, and says to them—*as before*—"Peace be unto you." He then said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." Then, says John, "Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord, and My God." Now here is room again for another of John's equivocations. He does not say that Thomas actually did examine either his hands or his side—he only says that the man proposed that he should do so. Thomas, having been half incredulous and half believing, would not be likely, after such a proposal had been made to him, to do any thing that would imply so much doubt, not only of the reality of the person, but also of the truth of the man's declaration, as, after the offer had been made to him in a tone of confidence, then to proceed to *make* the examination in earnest. Probably the man's apparent willingness to be examined confirmed Thomas in the belief that he was Jesus without any examination—if so, it would have appeared to him indecent irreverence to make the examination, and he would be satisfied without making it, as the others had been.

But supposing he actually did put his hand upon the side, and even suppose (what would not be very probable) that the side was naked, it is hardly possible that there should have been such a scar there as that a person, who expected as a matter of course (as Thomas by this time must have done) to *find* the scar there, would not be very liable to be deceived in just placing his finger for a moment on a substance so yielding as flesh. Besides, such a spear as those used for piercing the sides of those, who were executed, would undoubtedly be but a small instrument, and would leave but a trifling mark, and not such an one as John speaks of, into which a man might "thrust his hand."

* John 20—23. "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained.

Or supposing that Thomas did go so far as to look at, or feel of, the hand of the man, and supposing he actually did discover some appearance of a slight wound there; we must remember that it had been eight days since this man had been seen by the others, and if he were one of the spurious Messiahs, and designed at this time to attach this sect to him, he would naturally think that some new corroborating circumstance would at this time be necessary to keep up the deception which he had practised once, and might slightly wound his hand so as to give it just enough of the desired appearance to impose on the credulity of a man like Thomas, who was nine-tenths imposed on before.

The fact that the man had not been seen for eight days is very strong evidence that some cheat of this kind was practised on Thomas, if it were true that he examined the hand at all—a circumstance, which I entirely disbelieve. This whole story of Thomas's examination of Jesus is an exceedingly suspicious one. It is such an one as might be most easily manufactured, and one too very necessary to be manufactured, or otherwise supplied, in order to make out any thing of a plausible case in favor of a resurrection.

But even if Thomas did proceed to examine both the hand and the side, and even if he found marks there which satisfied *him*, still, the fact that he made so critical an examination, would argue most forcibly that the *personal appearance* of the individual did not well correspond with that of Jesus, and, of course, that the marks were counterfeit.

There is still another objection to the whole testimony of these alleged scars or wounds, and that is, that if a divine being were to be restored to life miraculously, it appears a little probable that he would be restored unblemished, and bearing no mark of man's violence, instead of thus bringing back his scars or wounds with him—otherwise the work of restoration would seem to have been but half performed. Supposing his legs had been broken on the cross, as the legs of the others were, would he have come back with broken legs?

John says again that this man was seen by a part of the disciples a third time. This appearance must have been thirty days or more after the last, if the individual was seen by the disciples but three times in all, (and we have none but hearsay evidence to show that he was seen more than three times); because Luke says (Acts 1—3) that Jesus was on the earth forty days, and the second time that he was seen was only eight days after he was supposed to have risen, and they could not have known that he was on the earth forty days, unless they saw him at the *end* of that time.

This individual, whoever he might be, appeared to them standing onthe shore in the morning, after they had been fishing through the night, (John 21—3 and 4). John acknowledges that when they first saw him on the shore, they did not know that the man was Jesus. It is evident also that, even after they had come to him on the shore, they were in doubt as to the identity of the man, for John says (21—12) that "none of his disciples durst ask him, who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." Now if they knew that it was Jesus, how happened it that they *thought* of asking him who he was? yet the fact that they did not dare to ask him, proves that they desired to ask, or thought of asking, him; and the fact that they thought of asking, or desired to ask him, proves that they were in doubt. So that here is another case (only one of many as I believe) where John has attempted to make his story stronger than the truth. He probably, in years afterward, on recurring to this incident, and dwelling upon it, brought himself to believe that the man seen was Jesus.

There are some good reasons for believing, that John has colored his whole account of this supposed Jesus much beyond the reality. He was under strong temptation to exaggerate. His object, as was stated before, in writing his narrative, was to prove that Jesus was not a mere man.* It was important to the progress and dignity of the system that he should prove this—and it was important also to his own reputation and influence among the early converts, because he had undoubtedly always held that doctrine to them. But to establish this fact a strong story was necessary. Forty years experience, in the labour of convincing men of the truth of such improbable facts as his system rested on, had taught him that a very plausible and unhesitating story was absolutely necessary to gain credit, and the same experience had taught him how to tell such a story—and furthermore, many of those stories of his, which differ from any told by the others, are of such a kind as could be easily manufactured from very slight circumstances. He was also a man of a low, contemptible and itching ambition, as is proved by the facts that he wished to have the promise of *sitting next* to Jesus in heaven, (or in his kingdom on earth), (Mark 10—35 to 37), and that he repeatedly pretends, by speaking of himself as "that disciple whom Jesus loved," to have been his favorite over the others—a fact, which I am not aware that any, but himself, ever discovered. A disposition so low, and so craving of notoriety, as this, is almost always associated with a propensity to practice duplicity and deception—and therefore, even if there were no circumstances, *out* of his narrative, to oppose his statements, his own character is a sufficient reason why we should not credit a word that he says, which looks improbable.

The testimony of Paul is (1 Cor. 15—5 to 8) that Jesus was once seen by five hundred at once, and that lastly he was seen by himself. I contend that it is not at all probable that even the individual, who pretended to be Jesus, ever made that pretension in the presence of five

* See Lempriere's Biog. Dict.

hundred, and for these reasons among others, viz: first, that we have only Paul's word for it, and as he has, as the reader will recollect, been already convicted of direct falsehood in one instance,* of probable falsehood in another, and in another of deliberate deception, which is equally falsehood, though accomplished by actions instead of words, his word is good for nothing as evidence of any thing improbable—and, second, that, of the four, who pretend to give the most minute accounts, which have ever been given, of the life, death, supposed resurrection, &c. of Jesus, not one says a word of his having ever been seen by the five hundred, or by any except his eleven disciples and four or five other individuals. John, in particular, has been *very* minute in his account of the several times when the man was seen by a few persons only, and of the circumstances attending each of those exhibitions, yet he has said not a word of his being seen by the five hundred, although he would most certainly have done so (supposing him to have had common sense) if he had known of any such occurrence—and he, from his situation, must have known of it, if it had happened. Perhaps Paul *heard* that he was seen by that number, and perhaps he did not—it would however be nothing improbable that he should hear so, even if there were not the slightest truth in the statement.

But supposing that the individual were seen by five hundred persons—we should not then know whether they believed him to be the real Jesus or not. Even Paul does not go so far as to say that they did—and, in the absence of further proof, the probability is altogether that they did not. John says (11—45, 46) that many Jews saw Lazarus raised from the dead, but also virtually says that a part of them believed that Jesus only attempted to practice a cheat upon them. So also some of the Pharisees saw the pretended miracle of restoring the withered hand, but, instead of believing it a miracle, evidently believed it a hoax. This case of the five hundred is very likely to have been another of those, where men saw, but did not believe, and therefore the fact that the individual was seen by five hundred, if such were the fact, would be worth nothing to prove that that individual was Jesus, unless it be shown also that the five hundred recognised him as such.

But Paul says also that he himself once saw him. Now since all the evidence heretofore offered of Paul's dishonesty, and of his readiness to assert positively any thing that was necessary for his cause, if it had the slightest foundation in hearsay, might go for nothing, in some men's minds, against the positive declaration of so great an apostle as he, I esteem it fortunate that he has in this instance, *by contradicting his own testimony*, saved me the necessity of laboring to do it in any other way than by referring to his own acts. I say therefore, that he has proved, by his own conduct, that if (what is not very probable) he ever saw the individual who *pretended* to be Jesus, he did not at the time believe him to be him, because, if he had, he would of course, have been converted at once—whereas he was not converted until long afterwards, nor until he had been accessary to the murder of Stephen, on account of his preaching in the name of this same Jesus.

Perhaps Paul might have seen an individual, who pretended to be Jesus, and, though he did, not at the time, believe him to be the real one, he might nevertheless, after his conversion, on recurring to the circumstance, have brought himself to a different belief, and then in his reckless manner declare positively that, which he believed, but which was nevertheless untrue. This appears to me the most charitable supposition that the case will admit.

Another circumstance, in addition to those heretofore mentioned, against the fact that Jesus ever rose from the dead, is, that he is not said, in either of the four gospels, to have shown himself, even to his most intimate friends and followers but three times for forty days. Where was he during all this time? Where is it possible that the real Jesus could have kept himself so long concealed?

Another circumstance, and one of the strongest character, against the same fact, is, that he did not show himself to the world. Could any man be so destitute of common sense, as to suppose that reasonable men would believe that a *corpse came to life*, on the bare assertion of those ignorant fishermen, who had all along been viewed, by the most enlightened part of the community, as deluded fanatics?—and that too, when no good reason could be imagined why, if the man were really alive, he should not exhibit himself personally?

Every motive of duty, and every argument of expediency would seem to have conspired to induce this man to show himself to the world, if he were alive—yet he did not. Is it possible for the ingenuity of man to conceive of a reason why he should remain on the earth forty days, unless it were for the express purpose of exhibiting himself openly, and thus furnishing as much testimony as possible, for the benefit of succeeding generations, of the reality of his resurrection?

But the different accounts given by these narrators are sufficient to show that there were various and disagreeing stories afloat even among those who had been his most immediate and confidential followers, as well respecting his resurrection and ascension, as about his acts before his death. For example, Luke, in his chapter on the resurrection, (the 24th), says nothing of Jesus having but *one* interview with his disciples, and he says (24—50 & 51) that (manifestly at the close of *this first* interview) "he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." This is a manifest contradiction of his

* See Chapter 1st, on the Spread of Christianity.

declaration, in the first chapter of Acts, that Jesus was on the earth forty days. Mark also, immediately after detailing the particulars of the first and only interview, of which he speaks as having been had by Jesus with his disciples, says (16—19) "so then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and set on the right hand of God." These representations contradict the story of John, who says that he was seen once *eight* days after the first interview, and again after that time. Again—Matthew does not speak of his being seen by his disciples but *once* after his death—John says he was seen three times. Further-more Mathew and John say not a word about his going up into heaven, although they most assuredly would have done so, if they had seen him, and Mark and Luke represent them to have seen him. Such differences of testimony show that there were unfounded reports in circulation about him, and believed among those who ought to have known the truth and the whole truth; that these reports differed materially from each other; that therefore no confidence is to be placed in any of them, and that we, of course, are without evidence that can be relied on.

There is another circumstance, which, of itself alone, ought to decide this question, in opposition to all the evidence together that can be found on the other side. It is this, that at the *only* interview, which Matthew (28—16 & 17) represents this supposed Jesus to have had with the eleven, who had been his immediate and confidential followers, *a part of those very eleven doubted whether the individual were he.* If any one of these eleven, after having once been an implicit believer in Jesus, after having been reminded of the intimations that Jesus had given that he should die and rise again, after knowing that the body was missing from the sepulchre, after having heard the stories of the women who had been to the sepulchre, and of the two going to Emmaus, after having gone "into a mountain where Jesus had appointed" with the *expectation* of meeting him, would then, on seeing the individual, doubt, while the rest believed, it is madness, it is the height of superstitious folly, for us to believe, on such testimony, that an individual rose from the dead.

I will mention another circumstance bearing upon this point—one very insignificant and unimportant standing alone, but which, considered in relation to the resurrection of Jesus, must, it appears to me, if men have a spark of reason in judging of this question, put an extinguisher upon the last pretence that he ever rose from the dead.

John says (20—1 to 7) that he himself ("the disciple whom Jesus loved" is the language used) was the first one of the disciples, and undoubtedly the first person, who arrived at the sepulchre after Mary had told them that the stone was rolled away from the door—and he says that "the napkin, which was about his head, was *not lying with the linen clothes*, but *was wrapped together in a place by itself.*" Did Jesus, when rising from the dead, leave a part of his grave clothes in one place, and a part in another. Did he stop to wrap up and lay aside this napkin? or was it done by some one, who carried, or assisted in carrying away the body? Which is the most probable? If a *chimney sweep* were to rise from the dead, he would no more think of *wrapping up and laying aside the napkin that had been about his head,* than he would of waiting in the tomb for his breakfast. But if the Son of God, or a Saviour of a world, or any such being, when rising from the dead to "bring life and immortality to light," should do an act of this kind, such an incident would present the most remarkable illustration, that the world ever furnished, of the truth of the adage, that "there is but a step between the sublime and the ridiculous."

Finally, the fact that no one of the eleven ever knew what became of this individual, whom they supposed to be Jesus, is invincible evidence that he did not rise from the dead. 'Tis not a question to be argued, whether a Son of God, or a man who had risen from the dead, would have served his friends and followers the trick, which this man did the disciples, of going off and leaving them forever, without letting them know where he had gone.