

“VOX DEI”

A defence of Simple Faith.



Presenting the real case for

The Bible

and explaining the obstinacy
of the stalwarts who know
all that can be urged against
the Bible far better than
some of the critics, but who
remain absolutely convinced
that it is

The Word of God.

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A DEFENCE OF SIMPLE FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

We have travelled far since the time when a bishop made a sensation by first suggesting doubts as to the authority of the Pentateuch. Perhaps we have almost reached the time when another bishop may cause an equal sensation by confessing a belief that Moses was right after all. It is certain that in the present age there is very little belief in the only real foundation of Christianity. Few men have ever read the Bible through. We cannot recognise the sincerity of people who, as a matter of theory, thank God for giving them a revelation of His will, but while praising the book do not trouble to read it. Such people are only falling into harmony with a convention and making use of conventional language with no real meaning behind it. On the other hand, everyone can understand the meaning of men who attack or condemn the Bible. Scientists brush its claims aside as beneath their notice; Socialists attack it vehemently as an obstacle to their ambitions; and many leaders of religion use language as bitterly hostile as that of the atheist of half a century ago.

Meanwhile there are a few people left who cling most obstinately to the old idea of plenary inspiration, and who demonstrate by their acts that their faith is real. The writer of these lines was brought up in such an atmosphere. Among his earliest recollections is the family reading of the Bible. We read by a system which carried us through the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in the course of the year. We rarely omitted a chapter on the ground of unsuitability, and if it chanced that a portion of the daily reading was of such a character as to be unfit for reading aloud to the entire family, it was understood that the older members should peruse it in private. There are men and women living now who have sustained such a system of reading through life, going through the whole of the Bible twenty, thirty, or forty times in the course of their

studies, while some portions of the sacred writings have been perused many more times than this. They have compared part with part, they have studied history in the light of prophecy, and they remain to this day convinced that the Bible is in truth the Word of God, and that all its promises will be fulfilled.

Why is it that they are so obstinate when even ministers of religion have been prominent in leading a revolt against such simple faith? Some critics have a ready answer to this question. They scornfully affirm that these stubborn last defenders of the faith are fools, absolute simpletons who cling to the old absurd ideas merely because they have never possessed sufficient intelligence or received sufficient education to know how far the modern world has advanced.

It is quite true that often these defenders of the Bible have been, like the first disciples of Christ, "unlearned and ignorant men"; but it has not been an invariable rule, and even when they have been most lacking in learning they have been not at all deficient in elementary logic. When we find it impossible to understand the attitude of men who hold very definite doctrines, it is well either to refrain from expressing any opinion regarding their intelligence or to make ourselves acquainted with their peculiar point of view. If we investigate we shall generally find that there are some unsuspected reasons for the stubbornness of the last defenders; for absolute fools are almost as rare as wise men.

This essay in defence of simple faith is undertaken with the object of making the position of such devoted adherents of the Bible more intelligible to critics who have often treated them with a contempt which is undeserved. There is a real need for such a book, even in a world with libraries already too full. It is not that there are many absolutely new arguments or ideas to be presented. The arguments may be old and well known, but hitherto they have not been elaborated in such a manner as to give an outsider a proper understanding of the case as it appears to the devoted defenders of Scripture.

The force of the evidence is cumulative. It is impossible to appreciate the real value of any part of it unless we have a comprehensive grasp of the whole. This principle is recognised in connection with ordinary matters. It is possible to identify a man by a multitude of minor peculiarities, any one of which would seem absurdly trivial when considered by itself. He is exactly five feet ten in height, he has red hair, he is slightly lame in the left leg, he has an anchor tattooed on the right arm, and so on. Let the number of such peculiarities be multiplied sufficiently and we can be absolutely certain that we have the right man. If a casual, uninterested critic witnessed only a single point of the test he might exclaim scornfully: "What fools these people are. They think they have identified this man as the one they want merely because he has red hair!"

The injustice of such a comment is obvious. The significance of the man having red hair is wholly dependent on the fact that it is one of many peculiarities all pointing in the same direction. Let the critic master all the facts of the case, and even if he is not convinced that they have found the right man he will at least see the reasonableness of others holding such a conviction.

In the same way let the man who repudiates the claims of the Bible obtain a comprehensive grasp of the evidence as it appears to the real believer, and even though he remain a sceptic he will find a new respect for Christian "simpletons." Unfortunately this cumulative evidence is more complex than the most detailed description of a man. It requires many months of close study to enable one to grasp it fully, and generally speaking, sceptics of all degrees are unwilling to give the necessary time to such investigation. They brush aside the first point of evidence as absurdly inadequate by itself, and then by the time they have been persuaded to examine a second point they have forgotten the first. We could never identify the missing man if we examined all his peculiarities separately, with complete forgetfulness of all the others. We say this is the man we want not merely because he corresponds to the description given in any one point, but because he corresponds in every point. The real Bible believer says this is the Word of God not merely because of one point of evidence, but because of very many converging lines of evidence which he is able to perceive in one comprehensive view.

Another direction in which the casual critic goes astray in dealing with Christian simpletons is in his constant assumption that certain conventional ideas are accepted by everyone. There are some lines of evidence, especially in Old Testament prophecy, regarding the Messiah, which are really startling if carried to their logical conclusion, but which involve ideas so completely at variance with certain traditions of Christendom that the conventional Christian never pursues them. We have known an instance of a man of some learning condescending for a moment to answer one point raised by a "simpleton" and revealing an astonishing ignorance of the real issue. He contemptuously brushed the argument aside by pointing out the unpleasant conclusion to which it inexorably led, although as a matter of fact these unpleasant associations greatly added to the force of the argument. The "simpleton" who, of course, knew every detail of the case far better than the critic could tell him, accepted the unpleasant idea as a palpable fact which no real believer in Scripture could deny. It seemed to him that the critic, for all his learning, was a man of such abysmal ignorance in Bible matters that it was useless to reason with him. The real difficulty was that there was a complete failure to understand the issue.

We have known the Bible devotee to fall into an exactly similar error. He has grouped all sceptics together, and has apparently supposed that a modern scientist in some way stands for the defence of all the ideas that have ever been expressed in the name of science since the world began. Thus, instead of dealing with a new theory on its merits, he has scornfully brushed it aside by showing that it contradicts certain ideas that have been discarded long ago. The learned sceptic can see how contemptible and foolish such a method is in dealing with his convictions. Surely he will desire to avoid falling into a similar error in his treatment of others.

This little work is undertaken with the idea of presenting in simple and comprehensive form some of the principal reasons for the intense conviction still held by some people that the Bible is, in the fullest sense, a true book. It will not be possible to reveal the matter in the glowing light in which it appears to those who have devoted years of study to the sacred writings and have lived in an atmosphere of fervent faith.

It may be possible to present a view of the subject sufficiently complete to be stimulating to friends and enlightening to the opponents of the Bible. It may be even that in some cases a train of thought will be started with ramifications far beyond the scope of the present essay.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCEPTICAL TENDENCY.

It is not necessary to say much in defence of the Christian simpleton regarding his belief in God. Few men venture to deny the existence of a Creator, even if they are atheist or "without God in the world." It is doubtless difficult to realise the idea of an all-powerful Creator, Uncreate and Immortal, but it is still more difficult to deny Him. The Universe as now constituted must have had a cause adequate to the present effect. That cause must have been a force of some kind or it could have produced nothing. That force must, in some form, always have existed, or it could never have come into existence. A force which always has existed and which has been the primary cause of all things is utterly beyond our understanding, so that whether we accept the idea of a Creator or not, we are bound to begin our conception of the Universe with an unknowable force. It is no more difficult to believe in an intelligent first cause than in a blind force. We cannot grasp the idea of anything having always existed. Unending time and unending space are utterly beyond our comprehension, whether we believe in God or whether we think that all things have come by chance from an unintelligent and unconscious force. In view of the world of life and intellect this force has produced, it seems more reasonable to believe, in a conscious Creator, and so to begin our philosophy with a recognition of God.

The case, indeed, may be stated far more forcibly than this. All that has been proved by genuine science tends to show that we can never get out of anything more than it originally contained or than has been put into it. All the pitiable attempts of inventors to make perpetual motion machines were efforts to flout this law. Some primitive scientists spent years attempting to hang weights on a wheel in such a manner as to keep it constantly revolving. Some inventors laughed at the folly of the wheel man, but fell into precisely the same error with a mechanism only slightly more complex. They tried to use the falling of water to drive a wheel, and thought to have enough spare power to pump the water back to its original position. They failed to recognise that to lift a given volume of water to a certain height would take exactly as

much power as the same water would yield in falling. Any heat caused through friction of machinery would be dead loss to the inventor. Such men attempted to cheat Nature by a complication of chains and cogs. They easily confused themselves, but Nature never made a mistake. At last her law has been recognised and reduced to a formula. "Action and reaction are equal." Whether we hang weights on a wheel or whether we try to harness the current of electricity to make it self-generating, we are confronted with this inexorable law.

Does not the same principle prevail in the larger machinery of worlds and systems? All the stars known to astronomers only constitute a speck floating in boundless space. The energy of the inventor's machine is dissipated in the surrounding world, and he cannot recapture it. The whole system of worlds is surrounded by infinite space into which its light and heat will radiate, and what is there to bring back that lost energy to keep the finite machine moving. Yet clearly the system of worlds and suns is an evidence of perpetual motion, for it is moving now, after the lapse of infinite time. The only explanation is that all forces and substances are finally subject to an infinite will. The man who thinks the universe is a perpetual motion machine without any supreme will to control it is as foolish as the inventor who assayed to harness gravitation to his service by hanging weights on a wheel. The man who imagines that a blind and unconscious first cause could produce intelligence and volition is as foolish as the one who believes that water will mount by the force of gravitation higher than its fount. Science tends to prove that which philosophy would enunciate. All substance comes from pre-existing substance. All force comes from pre-existing force. All life from pre-existing life. All intelligence from pre-existing intelligence. And in that conception of substance, force, life, and intelligence we have the idea of God as the one supreme reality. Everyone will concede the lesser part of the argument. The fact that substance and force exist now, proves that in some form they always have been. Why not the logical conclusion? The fact that life and intelligence exist now proves that they always have been. Nothing can put into the universe more power than was originally there. It is difficult to believe in the existence of an all-powerful God; but the difficulty is of the same kind as that we experience when we contemplate the idea of space without limit or time without either beginning or end. We cannot understand it, yet it must be so.

Probably many sceptical observers would admit freely that Christian "simpletons" have good grounds for their confidence in this foundation of their belief. Such critics would invite us to deal with faith in the Bible as a revelation from God, and to elaborate our defence of the "simpleton" for holding so persistently his confidence in revelation.

There is one phase of the matter to which we pass very naturally from consideration of the belief in God. It is necessary to make a statement which will probably seem very strange to sceptics, and will perhaps at first be derided by almost everyone who hears it. Yet as the result of twenty-five years of constant observation the writer has no hesitation in making the affirmation. The real Christian "simpleton," the man who genuinely believes in the Bible and studies every part of it, supports his position by arguments which, whether completely reasonable or not, are certainly appeals to reason. On the other hand, the bitter opponent of Scripture generally uses arguments nine-tenths of which are merely appeals to human passion, prejudice and sentimentality.

This doubtless will seem an extraordinary statement, but it will not be difficult to make every reader recognise the truth of it. The earnest Christian who tries to establish the fact of Divine revelation realises that sentiment which appeals to him will not influence opponents, and he therefore eliminates feeling from his argument. He cites the preaching of the early disciples and emphasises the fact that they had no worldly advantage to gain and everything to lose by their testimony as to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He points to the alleged fulfilment of prophecy, and argues that an unaided man could not possibly foresee future events as the writers of the Bible foretold them. These are certainly appeals to reason, however unconvincing you may think them: What happens in the average discussion when the opponent of Scripture begins his attack? He generally pays little heed to the Christian's argument, but makes a horrifying parade of the ugly features of Bible history and teaching. The bloodshed, the suffering, the exhibition of man's impotence, all the features, in fact, which are most distasteful to the natural man. There can be no doubt that this kind of tirade is effective. Many conventional Christians have been overwhelmed by the discovery that the Book to which they had rendered an unreasoning allegiance administers such rude shocks to human sentiment. It is easy to understand why the opponent of Scripture has been led to use such arguments as the chief of his stock-in-trade. They have had the most effect on the majority of Christian apologists. It is clear, however, that they are only appeals to prejudice and sentiment. They will not have the slightest effect on the real Bible devotee. He knows all the ugly passages better than any opponent can tell him, and he knows that there is nothing in Scripture more horrifying than the events of which he can read in secular history or can see in the world around him. Such a man marvels at the narrowness of people who allow their faith in God to be ruled by the experience of the moment.

"What!" one such exclaimed, "people losing faith in the existence of God because of this last terrible war! Why, if we

had no better foundations than that our faith would be killed in our Sunday schools!"

When you reflect on the matter you must surely admit that it is very unreasonable and little-minded for a man to alter his conception of unalterable verities merely because he discovers that the generation in which he lives is no better than the hundreds of generations that have preceded him.

The real believer in the Bible tries to face the ugly truths of life with endurance and resignation. He recognises, as all thinkers admit, that we are driven back to acknowledge a supreme Creator in spite of all the terrible events of life. He claims that insomuch as the ugly passages contained in the Bible can be applied as a reasonable argument, they are in favour of the Book and not against it, for they are in harmony with all past history and present fact.

If such a man sees that since the days of Christ there have been "wars and commotions" and "distress of nations,"¹ does that constitute any reason why he should lose faith in Scripture? If, in taking a long survey of history, he is forced to the conclusion that God permits or even "creates evil,"² is that any reason why he should begin to doubt the Bible? Or if, in contemplating the idea of God as the ruler of all, he sees wicked men used as the "sword of the Lord" for the punishment of other wicked, should that make him doubt? If finally he feels crushed and overwhelmed with a sense of human insignificance, if in observing Nature "red in tooth and claw," careless alike of "the single life" and the type, he is at last led to exclaim "all nations are before God as a drop of a bucket," or "the small dust of the balance, altogether vanity,"³ is such a conclusion to make him deny the truth of the Book which makes these affirmations? The ugly passages in Scripture can be used as effective weapons by unbelievers just insomuch as they are appeals to human passion, prejudice and sentiment. The moment we try to make a reasonable application of them the argument is all the other way, for we are led to recognise that here we have a collection of writings, telling us about God, giving us hope of a better life, and yet at the same time recognising the terrible facts of this world.

This distinction may be emphasised if for a moment we suggest an application of the sentimentalist's argument to a scientific discussion. When Charles Darwin and other lesser men have expounded the doctrine of evolution they have tried to reason from a multitude of proved facts to a conclusion in dispute. Their arguments have unquestionably been appeals to reason, whether we consider them sound or unsound. What would be thought of the Christian who boastfully claimed that he could overthrow the scientist's theories, and who then confined himself

(1) See Luke xxi. (2) See Isaiah xlv., 7. (3) See Isaiah xl. 15, 17.

entirely to a tirade against the cruelty involved in evolution? Nature certainly appears far more cruel according to the faith of the scientist than in the hopes of the Christian. The struggle is so much more protracted and with so much less hope of alleviation. What is it but a painful fight to rise higher, to suffer more keenly during untold millions of years? And what hope but to continue the struggle for some millions of years more until the powers of Nature fail and all creatures go back to the frozen dust from whence they came?

What would be thought of the Christian who attacked the doctrine of evolution on these grounds, fulminating against the cruelty of Nature and appealing to human passion? What a contemptible sentimentalist he would seem! In what way are the sceptics superior when they use the same foolish arguments against the Bible?

It may freely be admitted that such critics have some excuse. They have fallen into the habit of using the kind of appeal that proves effective without inquiring into the sense of it. A man who in early days has taken the Bible on trust from his spiritual guides, one who has never read more than a few chosen chapters and who has only paid heed to the prophets of smooth things, may so easily be turned from his conventional allegiance. In religion he is only a flabby sentimentalist, and the flabbiest of arguments suffice to overthrow him.

If, however, you desire to understand the position of the real adherents of the Bible, you must recognise the possibility of their being at least as stalwart as the devotees of science. A real scientist patiently studies the book of Nature and compares part with part. He recognises that his sentiments, his ambitions, and his affections count for nothing in the ordering of law. He patiently bears all the hard blows that Nature gives him, and he loves her in spite of them all. It is so with the real Bible believer. He admits freely that the Bible contains many statements that shock and wound him, but he loves the Book in spite of them all. He recognises the utter futility of raging against unpleasant truths, or of setting up human standards by which to judge the conduct of God.

The sceptic sometimes, in an attempt to invest his attack with an element of reason, raises the question, "Is not your God all good? If so, how can you reconcile this quality with some of the acts recorded of Him in Scripture?" Such a question offers an excellent foundation for blasphemous fulminations which may silence the Christian through his abhorrence of such language, but which make no appeal to reason. Certainly the Bible affirms that God is good; but would any man who admitted even the possibility of a supreme being existing, venture to call Him anything else? God is good from the highest possible standard, and that standard is His own. The attempt to judge the Creator

by human measurements is grotesque folly. We cannot even agree as to what constitutes a good man. Find a man who is prominent in the world and who thus wields a measure of power, and although he has all the virtues of an ideal hero, someone will plot to murder him and hundreds of his fellows will call him scoundrel. If we are unable to agree in judging those of our own nature in connection with the matters of our little world and our short span of life, how shall we judge the Supreme Being in His purpose relating to infinite space and time?

When we speak of a good man we do not mean good from the standpoint of the animals he breeds to supply him with food. When we speak of a good woman we do not mean from the point of view of the domestic cat and her many kittens. We mean good from the human point of view with human purposes and final ideals. Why, oh why should men become so utterly shallow when they try to criticise God? Why should they assume that all other creatures are made for us and we are made for ourselves? Why judge from the human standpoint when considering the lower creatures and still from the human standpoint when considering the Creator of all?

The genuine, whole-hearted Bible lover tries to escape from this narrowness. He recognises that human sentiment and self-pity are worthless in the discussion. He recognises that the work of God can only be judged in relation to infinite time, and the matter is beyond our grasp. He recognises that God's word "will not return unto Him void. It will prosper in the things whereunto He has sent it"—and nothing else matters.

CHAPTER III.

MIRACLES AND UNBELIEVABLE STORIES.

Critics appear to regard the stalwart Bible believer as a man of amazing credulity, who accepts all the extraordinary stories of Scripture without ever being conscious of any difficulties. As a matter of fact, in many cases the believer is fully aware of incongruities and stumbling blocks; but he claims also to be conscious of certain superhuman qualities which demand his belief. In this again his appeal is to reason, whether the conclusion is reasonable or not. The argument may be stated thus.

The book of Daniel, for instance, claims to give us a revelation from God. A considerable portion of the book of Daniel reads like a fairy tale written for children, and it is quite unlike what we should expect in a divine revelation.

These two propositions may be accepted freely by all candid people.

But we have no data by which to determine how God would reveal His will. If He inspired a man to write a divine book, it might be a profound and heavy treatise which only professors could understand, or it might quite as likely be a jolly tale for the children. If, therefore, the book of Daniel reveals a knowledge which only God could possess, there is reason for believing that the claims of the book are true. The mere fact that it is not the kind of book we should expect a divine revelation to be counts for nothing in the logic of the case. Hardly anything in life turns out exactly as we expect. We grow in knowledge through a long series of surprises, and children often greet the first assurance of the most sober facts with incredulous laughter.

Then again, the critic is not quite logical in his treatment of miracles. Some men, claiming to speak in the name of science, rule out miracles altogether on the ground that they are unscientific. This is simply begging the question. Science means knowledge reduced to a system. We may, with our knowledge of existing forces, affirm that certain things are possible; but unless we possess infinite knowledge of all forces we are not in a position to say that anything is impossible unless it involves a contradiction. If fish could engage in philosophic discussion they might, on the basis of exact knowledge, affirm that it was possible for their

kind to live out of water for a few minutes. If, however, they went beyond and denied the possibility of any creatures surviving out of water for a longer period they would be falling into an obvious error.

Is it not a fact that life is found almost everywhere with organs and capacities suited to its environment? In the air and in the water, on the earth or in the earth. In the dry sand or in the mud at the bottom of a river. Under almost all conditions life of some sort is found, from the lowest form we can recognise as living to the highest form we are capable of understanding. Is it not both illogical and narrow-minded to suppose that there is nothing in the scale of life higher than man? All the argument of analogy would suggest the probability, on scientific grounds, that there are beings of a higher order than ours, capable of living where we should perish, and capable of understanding us though we may not be able to understand them. If once we concede that there may be such beings it is useless to deny the possibility of miracle. The occasional intervention of the ethereal race in the affairs of humanity would account for any miracle that is recorded in the Bible.

Perhaps a follower of Hæckel may arise to carry the story of creation rather further, and on the most thoroughly atheistic lines find an explanation for all these things. If blind force and chance could evolve the human race, surely, given long enough for its operations, it could evolve an ethereal race also. And as the universe has already had infinite time for its processes, it must already have produced all it is capable of producing. The ethereal beings are generally invisible to us, just as we are invisible to the fish; but sometimes they come down among us in strange disguises, and then miracles happen. The old stories of wonders might become quite popular on such a basis, with the God of Israel excluded!

Of course the scientific man does not mean that miracles are impossible. All he means is that he does not believe in them. There is no reason why he should believe them unless they are extraordinarily supported by evidence; but it is foolish and unfair to prejudice the case by declaring beforehand that they are impossible.

A more logical method of attack is that of the one who produces evidence of a credulous age in which people readily believed almost any story of wonders and miracles. Such a critic contrives quite plausibly to class the miracles of the Bible with these discredited tales.

This argument should be recognised by everyone, and its correct weight should be allowed in our consideration of this subject. Unfortunately this is very seldom done. The logical conclusion to be drawn from the premises is obviously that we should examine the evidence of any story of miracle with great

care. If we find ourselves in a neighbourhood where spurious coins circulate freely, we do not conclude that all coins are spurious. The base metal is an imitation of the genuine. We make the logical decision that any coins in which we are interested must be examined carefully. In dealing with these stories of miracle, however, the believer too often pays no heed to the warning, while the unbeliever accepts the fact that there are many spurious coins as an excuse for not examining the evidence at all.

In considering the possibility that there may have been an age in which real miracles were worked, it is only fair to recognise how unconvincing and even absurd anything unfamiliar may sound if it is related in the old-fashioned and matter-of-fact language of our English Bible. The sceptics of Voltaire's day scoffed at the old stories of miracles, but assuredly they would have scoffed more at true stories of modern development described in the old style of language. If the days of Israel's kingdom in Palestine had been the age of science instead of the age of miracle, and then the accumulated knowledge and the many inventions had perished as completely as the power to work miracles, how farcical the record would seem. Let us suppose a few choice specimens of how the Bible might have read in such a case.

"It came to pass in the reign of King Uriah that cunning men made them chariots to fly in the air, and they flew even to Egypt, and to the far off isles of the Gentiles, going and returning swifter than the eagle, and so high that no enemy could see them; and the people marvelled: They made use of the free spirit of the air to talk and to send their messages withal. They laid them down wires through the length and breadth of the land, from Dan even to Beersheba, and from the river Jordan unto the great sea, so that the king in his palace could talk with his ministers in whatsoever part of the land they sojourned, and they could answer him again.

"And it came to pass that a wise man came to the king and said, 'Is there any searching of the power of the spirit? Behold, it is a light thing that we should send messages through wires. We will build towers and send our messages through the air.' And the king answered, 'Even so, do as thou hast said; have not I commanded?' And it was so that they built towers, and the king of Egypt he also built, and they flashed their messages through the air from the centre of the land to the remotest bounds of Egypt, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye."

* * * * *

"And there came a young man from Gilead, and he said: 'Go to, let us make machines that can talk with the voice of man.' So he took him wood and iron and brass, and he taught cunning men to shape them withal, and he made him a machine which could speak the words of a man. It even spake great and

high-sounding words in the presence of the king, 'reproving him for his evil ways, and saying, "Turn from thine iniquity, O king."' And the king rose up astonished."

One can almost hear the derisive laughter of such men as Voltaire on reading such accounts as these. They would have exclaimed: "This is the greatest absurdity of all! If it is once granted that God has intervened in the affairs of men miracles become possible, but who can believe such an absurdity as the idea of men building towers which would flash their messages for a thousand miles through the air, or of making a machine which could talk?"

It must in common fairness be admitted that our impressions as to whether a story sounds reasonable count for very little in the logic of the argument. Whatever the true story of creation may be, it would certainly sound incredible to us. Whenever people possess powers which are quite beyond our range, a simple narrative of their exploits will seem absurd.

Scientists who claim that nothing has ever happened outside the reign of law as they have observed it, have to repudiate their statement almost as soon as it has been enunciated; for there was a time when not a single living creature existed in all the universe. Surely the beginning of life was in the nature of miracle?

Men who laugh at the old stories of wonders find themselves surrounded by wonders of another type, the story of which would seem equally absurd to another generation.

The only logical course is to test each case upon its merits. Not to say that no man could possibly make a talking machine or that messages could not possibly be flashed for a thousand miles through the air, but to reserve our judgment, to admit the abstract possibilities, and to believe the accomplished fact when it is well attested by evidence. Not to affirm that no man could possibly be endowed with power to give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; but certainly to demand very good evidence before we believe in such things.

CHAPTER IV.

One more argument of the sceptic calls for attention before we proceed to explain the case of the Christian "simpleton."

An attempt has often been made to overthrow the Bible by exhibiting the apparent contradictions between one part and another. In many controversies during the past fifty years this has been the principal weapon used, and probably many opponents of the Bible have marvelled that any Christians could survive the deluge of destructive criticism.

It is certain that the critics have never secured an adequate understanding of the case or they would not attach so much importance to these efforts. It is generally easier to point out apparent discrepancies in any book than to explain them. Even if the teaching of the book is perfectly harmonious, a partial view will disclose some apparent contradictions which can only be explained through a patient investigation of all the facts. Thus, while the superficial contradiction may be pointed out in a sentence, the fundamental harmony may require a complete essay. An avalanche of alleged contradictions is effective in a public discussion when passions are excited, and the most generous applause is often given to the most shallow hits; but it cannot be expected that such trifles will greatly influence the convictions of one who is thoroughly in earnest.

The Christian champion quite reasonably points out that the argument based on supposed contradictions is double-edged. Whenever it is found that something which appeared contradictory is harmonious after all, this discovery is more than a refutation of the antagonistic argument. It is a point in favour of the book. The Bible is a compilation written by so many different authors and separated by such wide intervals of time that one would expect the contradictions to be numerous and unmistakable. The hostile critic says that they are so, but he has often weakened his case by protesting too much. Some efforts to establish contradictions have been as unfair and tortuous as the most desperate of all the attempts to set up a defence. The Christian stalwart has found the explanation of apparent discrepancies in many instances; why should he not assume that with further knowledge he would find it in every case?

As one pointed out some years ago, there may often be an unknown factor which reveals a complete harmony between

apparently contradictory statements. Two accounts of the exile of Napoleon Buonaparte would appear hopelessly contradictory if one related to the time when he was sent to Elba and the other to the time when he was banished to St. Helena, yet both might be perfectly true. If nothing were known of an escape and a second overthrow, a defender of the records who suggested such an explanation would be derided as an unfair champion of narratives which were obviously indefensible.

Then again, the real Bible believer fully realises that he is not dealing with original writings. When manuscripts are copied and translated, even with the utmost care, it is almost inevitable that some errors will enter. The man of faith may feel confident that God would exercise a controlling hand, even upon such matters as transcription and translation, but just as He permits His servants to be tried severely while guarding them against overwhelming temptation, so He may have interfered to protect the written word only so far as to insure that it would "prosper in the thing whereto He sends it."

The unbeliever may scoff at such thoughts, but it cannot well be denied that the Christian is logical in taking such an attitude. The analogy of Nature does not suggest that everything would be made easy for man. Nature hides her riches and men have to search for them with patient labour. Often men have mistaken Nature's laws, and failing to recognise that conditions were different, have brought disaster upon themselves. It is useless for the sufferers to declare petulantly that Nature is uneven and contradictory. If they study her more closely they will discover the fundamental harmony of her laws and the manner in which men have been at fault in applying them.

It is easy to understand how the alleged contradictions of Scripture would operate on the mind of a sincere believer. Perhaps, for instance, a sceptic pours forth a dozen of such objections. He and his friends smile with self-satisfaction, and they may be right in thinking that they have scored a polemical triumph. The sincere believer, however, wants to get at the root of the matter for the satisfaction of his own mind, and without much regard for the excitement of discussion. Perhaps as the result of his investigations he finds explanations which completely satisfy him in respect of half the objections raised. Naturally he accepts the conclusion as a further evidence of Bible truth, and a renewed assurance that if his knowledge could be extended all difficulties would vanish in the same way. He is logical in this. Beyond all cavil it is a fact that apparent contradiction with fundamental harmony is the characteristic of the true record, while superficial harmony with intrinsic contradiction is characteristic of the false. If several men give a true account of an event in which they have played a part, it may require some careful analysis before we perceive the complete harmony between

the several versions. If deceitful men in collusion concoct a story, the superficial harmony will be perfect. Careful analysis will be required to expose the discrepancies.

It certainly seems to the writer that in view of the many men belonging to different ages who contributed to the collection of writings we call the Bible, the case made out by those who have attempted to convict it of contradicting itself is surprisingly weak. It is a more logical style of attack than the appeals to human sentimentality or the attempt to use the weapon of ridicule, but it cannot be expected to carry much weight with serious students. People who have accepted the Bible much as an English schoolboy accepts the British Empire may be turned against it by the discovery that it is not in harmony with their views of life, and they are thus led to make an open repudiation of a faith that was never in them. To the real believer all these arguments appear as shallow trifling.

Perhaps a sceptic might exclaim, "You are trying to deprive us of all our weapons and so to fence the Christian round that no conceivable argument could influence him. If we declaim against the severity of the Bible, we are shallow sentimentalists with the logic of fact against us; if we ridicule the Bible, we are using an unfair weapon which can be employed against anything strange or outside of our usual orbit; if we point to the contradictions, these matters are of no weight, for some have been explained, and probably all could be explained if we had sufficient knowledge. What kind of attack can we make then? What kind of objection would carry any weight?"

To such questions we would answer—why worry about finding objections at all? If you desire to turn the stalwart believer from his faith, show him that his reasons for belief are inadequate. If you can do that, all other objections are superfluous. Until you can do that, all your usual methods of attack are utterly futile. Surely every man of commonsense will agree that if the God of the Universe were to give a message to us personally we might feel a hundred objections to it, although we should have too much sense to urge them. The message would probably differ greatly from all that we expected, but we should have too much intelligence to be surprised. It is almost impossible to think of a logical negative argument that could shake the claims of the Bible. We have so little data on which to work, for we know nothing of what God would or would not do. Incomparably the best argument to prove the Book false would be to show that there is no reason for believing it true.

There may be some people who read a psalm and exclaim, "How beautiful! The Bible must be the word of God." Then later they may have their attention drawn to the destruction of the Midianites, and they exclaim, "How dreadful! The Bible cannot be the word of God." If the sceptic only desires to influence such

people, then let him go on his way without any change of method. He cannot be too shallow in his appeals or too illogical in his arguments.

There are, however, some men of simple faith who are not ruled by sentimentality. They have received all the hard knocks the Bible can give them. They have studied all the alleged contradictions with the closest attention. Yet they maintain a faith which lives and moves in their everyday life, strengthening them for daily self-sacrifice and filling the future with soul-stirring hope.

It will be the object of the following pages to show some of their reasons. If any reader desires to understand them, it will be necessary to read carefully, and to bear the points in mind so as to obtain the comprehensive view. It is the cumulative force of the evidence that carries conviction. It is this that is persistently missed by critics.

CHAPTER V.

It has often been claimed by "unlearned and ignorant men" that there is no possibility of compromise in one's attitude towards the Bible. Either the Book is a revelation from God or it is the greatest imposture the world has ever known.

This harsh statement of the case is resented by many people who would greatly prefer to compromise in the matter. As a writer recently stated, "No one would dispute the supreme position of the Bible in literature if no claim had ever been made that it was a divine revelation." It would suit our convenience much better to regard the Scriptures as inspired only in the manner that all good books can be so described, leaving us at liberty to attach much or little importance to its messages according to the manner in which they appealed to us.

Learned men have often attempted to effect such a compromise, but they have not been very successful. Their learning has been used to confuse the issue rather than to enlighten it, and we have to confess that the Christian "simpletons" have been more logical. The Bible unmistakably makes claims which we do not find in an ordinary book. Repeatedly it represents God as speaking through men and declaring, "I am the Lord," "I am the God who brought you out of the land of Egypt." The prophets are represented as saying, "The Word of the Lord came to me," "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." One is represented as declaring that such evils befel him as the result of his testimony to the house of Israel that he determined to speak no more in the name of the Lord; but the Spirit compelled him (see Jer. 20). The history of Israel from the Exodus to the Captivity is a record of God's dealings with men. There were, however, some periods, such as in the early days of Samuel, when "The word of the Lord was precious and there was no open vision." There were also some very plain predictions that there was coming a time when the sun should go down on the prophets, when God would "hide His face from the House of Israel," and for a lengthy period the special revelations would completely cease.

The student who desires to understand the position of the Christian "simpleton" must pay careful attention to these special professions and reservations. Why are there such gaps in the history of this literature which claims to be inspired? If God

never spoke to the house of Israel he could not ever cease to speak. If they were never His people He never cast them away. It would seem strange, then, that there should be such a division between inspired and uninspired times. Strange that there should be predictions of an approaching eclipse of the prophetic impulse on account of the wickedness of the nation: and that later writers, whatever their ability might be, should meekly accept the situation and give tacit sanction to the condemnation. It would seem still stranger that the revival of prophetic claims in the last days of the Jewish constitution came only from a small and despised section of the people, and in connection with the introduction of a religion which, although powerful enough for its influence to sweep through the world, was nevertheless repudiated by the nation which gave it birth.

There can be no mistaking the fact that the New Testament Scriptures claim inspiration. Not only in the Gospel narratives, which place Jesus in such a special light, but even in the Epistles the most distinct claim is made that the writers were under the direct control of God. Thus the Apostle Paul writes: "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

On a special occasion the same Apostle explained that one particular feature of advice was given by permission and not by commandment, surely in itself a sufficient indication that these writings cannot be judged by ordinary standards. Indeed, the whole of the New Testament is in harmony with the declaration of the first few verses of the letter to the Hebrews: "God who at sundry times and in diverse ways spoke unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son."

The Christian may well ask, "If these claims were not true, why should not a second Isaiah have arisen to speak with all the old authority and to denounce the new religion?" It does not seem easy to suggest an explanation of this partiality of the prophetic impulse if it came solely by the will of man.

Beyond these general claims, which stamp the Bible as different from ordinary books, there are one or two special utterances which set forth the issue very distinctly and prepare the way for a searching test of these claims. In the book of Isaiah a challenge is addressed to all who should presume to dispute the supreme position of the God of Israel. They are invited to come forth and produce their reasons. "Show us the former things, or declare things to come." Then we have the God of Israel represented as saying, "I am God and there is none else declaring the end from the beginning and from former times the things that are not yet done; saying My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure."

This claim is put so definitely and so emphatically that the student is bound to recognise the setting of a direct test of the Bible. We certainly cannot in the exercise of our natural powers declare the end from the beginning. If we attempted anything in that direction it is practically certain that the march of events would discredit us, and the longer the period over which our pretensions could be put to the test the more complete would be our failure.

It is true that there have been some modern predictions which have excited a measure of interest through the manner in which they have been justified by events, but usually these prophecies have followed an obvious line of thought and have guarded themselves against the possibility of being proved false. They have predicted developments that were recognised as possibilities by all far-seeing men, and they have refrained from fixing any time for the realisation of their expectations. Thus the march of events may easily prove them true but can never prove them false. It has generally happened that when they have ventured to make a prediction which could be falsified their limitations have been exposed immediately.

We might with safety predict in this year of grace 1921 that there will come a time when the tides shall be harnessed to the service of man, when a source of power at present unknown will perform all the work of our inland cities, and when coal will be needed no more. Another century may easily witness such developments; but if the century should pass without them, the prediction is not falsified, for we fix no time period for the fulfilment of our prophecies. If, however, we venture to write that certain things never shall be, we may be proved false before the ink is dry on our paper.

The Christian stalwart often grows impatient with critics who attempt to class the prophecies of the Bible even with the most famous of Gentile prognostications. He maintains that they are utterly different, not only in degree, but also in kind. They set forth such high claims as to call forth the fiercest light of criticism, and they challenge eternity by affirming that certain expectations of man never shall be realised, even though from the ordinary human point of view they seemed inevitable.

It is only reasonable that all men who venture to treat the claims of the Bible slightly should at least make themselves acquainted with the point of view of those who, after such close study of these ancient writings, remain so confident of their super-human origin.

CHAPTER VI.

THE JEWS AS GOD'S WITNESSES.

In connection with the challenge the Bible offers to anyone who should dispute the supremacy of the God of Israel, and the claim to declare the end from the beginning, we have to take note of a very definite statement regarding the Jews. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen. . . . I have declared and have saved and I have showed when there was no strange God among you, therefore ye are my witnesses saith the Lord that I am God."

It is only reasonable to call the Jews as the first witnesses and to enquire whether their history offers any justification of the claim that the end was declared from the beginning in a manner beyond the power of man.

The argument to be drawn from the history of the Jews is well known and there is no need to elaborate it. All that is necessary here is to re-state the evidence in a series of simple affirmations and to point out the manner in which it constitutes a reasonable foundation for the argument which gradually develops with cumulative force in the mind of a Bible student.

Since the beginning of the Christian era the Scriptures of the Old Testament have been in the hands of Jews and Christians, whose mutual jealousies have safeguarded them from interpolation.

It will be admitted even by the most prejudiced opponent of the Bible that the whole of the Old Testament was completed long before the destruction of Jerusalem in the last quarter of the first century.

If, therefore, we consider only those well attested facts of history which have occurred since the beginning of the Christian era, we shall be able to put the claims of the prophets to a searching test.

If we compare the last seven chapters of Deuteronomy, the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus, the third chapter of Hosea, and the thirtieth chapter of Jeremiah, we shall find very definite statements regarding the future of the people to whom these writings were given.

A series of blessings were put before them if they should obey the law, and curses if they should disobey.

Moses said, "I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves and that evil will befall you in the latter day."

It is clear, therefore, that according to these Scriptures the curse pronounced would come upon them.

A fierce nation was to come against them and besiege them in all their gates until, amid scenes of appalling tragedy, they should be overthrown. They were to be sold into slavery until "no man should buy" them. They were thenceforth to be "scattered among all nations." They were to be persecuted and hated, to be an "astonishment, a proverb and a byword." They were to dwell for many days "without a king, without a prince, without a sacrifice, without an ephod and without teraphim." Yet, in spite of all these shocks to their nationality, in spite of their being without a country, and without organisation to hold them together, they were always to remain a separate and distinct people.

It was also declared with emphasis and reiteration that the fertile and favourably situated land of Palestine, instead of being developed by the conquerors and brought to an increased productivity, was to lie desolate for "many generations," so that the "heathen should be astonished" at its appearance. And this condition was to continue until the day of deliverance and restoration, when it should be "brought back from the sword and the desolation of many generations."

All these predictions have been fulfilled exactly. Many centuries after the last of them was written "the evil in their latter end" came upon the Jews. The Romans, to whom the figure of the eagle mentioned by Moses is singularly applicable, besieged Jerusalem, and in the straitness of that terrible time the predictions of Deuteronomy xxviii. were fulfilled with dreadful completeness. The city was overthrown, the survivors were sold into slavery until the slave markets were glutted and "no man would buy." After a second rebellion in the reign of Hadrian further punishment was administered, and the savage edict was issued forbidding the Jew to live in the land of his fathers. From that time the Jews have presented the anomaly of a people without a country. They have been scattered among all nations," as Moses declared they would be. They have been persecuted and hated in all these lands. They have been "an astonishment, a proverb and a byword" in the most literal manner, for the "wandering Jew" is a phrase known to everyone, and in the speech of the vulgar to "jew" a man is to defraud him.

After some attempts to appoint leaders who could help to sustain their nationality, the Jews surrendered themselves to the fate that had been foretold for them, and for many days they have dwelt "without a King and without a Prince." The symbols of their religion have similarly failed in accordance with the same prophecy. It has been impossible to sustain their ritual in their

enemies' land, and they have been "without a sacrifice and without ephod and without teraphim."

Yet in spite of all adversity, in spite of every circumstance which might have overwhelmed them and merged them into the surrounding nations, the Jews have remained through all the centuries a separate and distinct people. Their case is unique. For over seventeen hundred years they have been forbidden to enter their own land. They have been scattered in all parts of the earth and subjected to every kind of trial, but they remain a separate people to this day, reminding the earnest Christian of those challenging words repeated more than once in their ancient Scriptures, "Thus saith the Lord, though I make a full end of all nations whither I have driven thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee."

The facts of the case are not called in question. The dispute between the believer and the unbeliever is simply as to the significance of the facts.

A candid and capable sceptic will not pretend that he sees no force in the argument. Nor will he regard it as unworthy of consideration merely because it is old and well worn. An argument may lose some of its potency through frequent repetition just as a drug fails to have any effect on one who has taken too much of it. But if this principle applies to matters of reason and logic it is only our weakness; in harmony with the well known saying "familiarity breeds contempt." In strict logic the only effect of frequent repetition upon an argument is to test it by exposing any possible flaws and affording opportunity for an answer to be found. It is only a weakness of the human mind that yields to an interestingly novel argument while refusing to be influenced by much better reasons which are well worn.

What answer, then, has been found to this well known argument based on Jewish history? We know of none except an attempt to minimise the significance of the events. In this the opponent of the Bible has often missed the point. It has been urged that the preservation of the Jews in their dispersion was the natural consequence of the conflict between Christianity and Islam, or that it was due to certain special features of their law. Every phase of the history has been examined as if the defender of the Bible claimed that Jewish experience had been ruled by constant and obvious miracle, and the attacker only needs to show that all the results came as the natural effects of certain causes.

This completely misses the point. Of course things happened "quite naturally." All history is natural, but often it is very unexpected. What could be more natural than the manner in which England, France, Russia and Japan were brought into an alliance against the Germanic powers? Yet who would have expected such a development a few years earlier? What could be more natural than the way in which the power of the Czar

was broken and the Bolsheviks put in the ascendant? Yet who would have anticipated such a change? And who will venture to predict what the "natural development" of European history will be during the next decade? If the course of history is so uncertain and unexpected even over such brief periods, who could foresee the course of events for thousands of years ahead?

The ingenious critics who explain the natural combinations of causes which scattered the Jews among the nations, brought upon them bitter persecutions and yet preserved them through it all, only succeed in showing how easily events might have taken a different course; and thus they emphasise the significance of the prophecies which have been fulfilled.

When the Jews were prosperous in their land their prophets, claiming to speak the words of God and making their predictions with sublime confidence, declared that such a calamity as that of the year A.D 70 should come upon them. That they should be sold into slavery, that they should dwell for many days in a scattered condition, without a king or a prince or the proper symbols of their religion. That they should be persecuted and hated and yet never come to a full end. As sure as the covenant of night and day; as sure as the existence of God himself, the Jews were to be preserved through all their tribulation ready for that great day of restoration which is the principal theme of their inspired songs.

Still more remarkable is the prophecy that the land should be desolate. In this matter it would seem that all probabilities were against the prophet. Palestine was a favourably situated country in the centre of human activities. It is at the conjunction of three continents, presenting a long coast line to "the great sea" of the ancient world. It is a well watered land of great natural fertility, and there would seem every reason to anticipate that the "fierce nation" which was to come against it, possessing sufficient virility and energy to expel the Jews from the land, would develop the resources of the conquered country to a higher degree of fertility than ever. The prophets declared that it would lie desolate in the sight of all who passed by. The Jews had neglected to observe the Sabbaths of years while they dwelt in their own land, but the land was to "enjoy her Sabbaths"¹ while the people were "in the land of their enemies." The heathen were to be astonished at the barrenness of the land, and so this once fertile country was to remain until it was "brought back from the sword and from the desolation of many generations."

This was surely a bold forecast and, judging by ordinary standards, very unlikely to be justified. History, however, has fulfilled it completely. Again it might be easy to show the natural process which has produced the situation, but that does not in any way answer the argument.

(1) Lev. xxvi., 34.

Some critics have attempted a more direct attack, alleging that the land always was desolate and that the reports of its one-time fertility must have been false. Such statements have only been made by people who have lacked knowledge and who have been proportionately bold in speech.

The father of the present writer visited Palestine in 1887 as the guest of the late Mr. Laurence Oliphant. He was given facilities to examine the country, and he brought to the task a good knowledge of horticulture. He was astonished at the desolate appearance and the evidence of neglect, even after the descriptions he had read from the pens of travellers. Stones were scattered over the land, heaps of refuse, which might have been used to fertilise the soil, had been left to accumulate for generations to breed disease. yet on looking below the surface with the keen interest of a fruit grower the observer was amazed at the evidence of neglected wealth.

In these days there is no need to argue the matter further. The land is being brought back from the sword, and the most convincing evidence of its fertility is forthcoming. The suggestion that the ancient description was false need hardly be taken seriously.

All that is needed here is that we shall take due note of the ancient prophecies regarding both land and people. These predictions offer a challenge to eternity. They might easily have been falsified in any of the many generations that have passed. The fact that they have stood the test for over two thousand years surely offers some justification for the claim of the Bible defender that they are different from Gentile prognostications, not only in degree but also in kind.

It is not suggested that an unbeliever should immediately be convinced by them. We only urge that if he desires to understand the peculiar point of view of the thorough-going Christian he should take due note of them. With a full grasp of their entirety he should put them on the shelf of his mind, so to speak, ready to be produced when another point of evidence calls for co-operation. The argument of the Jews as God's chosen people is only the first stone in the building. If you desire to test the cumulative evidence we have to put before you it must be remembered.

CHAPTER VII.

CALVARY.

If Christ rose from the dead we can surely put full confidence in Him. The recognition of that one central doctrine of the Christian religion would make other argument superfluous. When sceptics repudiate the Bible it is certain that they deny the resurrection of Christ. When Christians are supine and indifferent it is certain that they do not properly realise that Christ rose. It is obvious, therefore, that in attempting to understand the confidence of Christians whose religion is a burning reality to them, it is necessary to examine carefully the direct evidence as to the Resurrection.

In this matter again the facts are well known, and yet have been much misunderstood. Some thoughtless rejectors have treated the subject as if the books of the New Testament could not logically be called in evidence because they are the writings in dispute. A moment's reflection will reveal the absurdity of such an attitude. Whenever we are considering the origin of a great human movement the very first witnesses should be the writers of the official records. We are not bound to believe the witnesses, but we are in reason bound to hear them and give due consideration to their testimony. If we conclude that what they say is not true it is reasonable to form a judgment as to whether they are dishonest men telling lies, for some sinister object, or whether they are mistaken men, honest but in error.

It is not reasonable for an objector to adopt a merely negative attitude, refusing to admit anything. Even the exact science of arithmetic would fail to convince a man if he only disputed the final result and refused to admit or deny any of the propositions leading to it. Unless he will agree that twice two make four we cannot begin to reason with him.

There are some propositions in connection with the rise of Christianity which are analogous to this element of mathematics. A great human movement does not arise without cause. An individual of exceptional character is almost invariably at the root of the matter. This is often the case even when the name of the prime mover does not transpire. How much more definitely is it the case when all traditions of the movement centre round him.

It must be accepted as an incontrovertible fact that in the closing years of the Jewish constitution in Palestine, only shortly before their dispersion, an extraordinary character appeared among the Jews. It is absolutely certain that He was hated, and His claims were rejected by the leaders of the nations. It is quite certain that He died. It is almost certain that He was crucified. It is incontestably true that a report was spread abroad that He had risen from the dead, and this was really the origin of the Christian movement.

These first postulates must be accepted by everyone. The evidence for them is independent of the New Testament record. These are broad facts which stand out clearly in history, and one cannot even pretend to account for the origin of Christianity without recognising them. Arising from these postulates we have a number of debatable questions. How far did the great character of real life correspond to the account we have of Him in the official records of the movement? Were the four Gospels written by the men whose names they bear or were they the products of a later age? Or does the truth lie between those positions and were the original records much altered and developed during the first century of the Christian era? What was the origin of the singular report that Christ had risen from the dead?

This last question is the most direct and the most important. The learned of the Gentile world scoffed at the idea of resurrection, which was quite contrary to their philosophy. The doctrine was adumbrated in many parts of the Old Testament Scriptures, and even directly stated in one or two passages, so that it was not foreign to Jewish thought. If we examine the official records of the Christian movement, however, we find very definite indications that the immediate disciples of Christ did not anticipate such an event. We are shown that they hoped for a restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, and when Christ died they lost faith in Him. The four Gospels give an account of such evidences of His resurrection as to set the matter at rest for ever if those records are true. If critics reject the account given in the official record, can they suggest any other explanation of the origin of this persistent story that Jesus rose from the dead?

An honest attempt was made in this direction some years ago, and was favoured even by some of the most eminent of the men who have repudiated the authority of the Bible.

It was admitted that Jesus was a remarkable man who might well command the most extraordinary devotion of His disciples, and by the same qualities arouse the bitter hostility of others. It was admitted that He was crucified, but it was suggested that He did not at that time die. The idea was that He swooned through the agony of crucifixion, that He was regarded as dead and laid in the tomb, and that afterwards He revived, thus giving His

disciples the impression that a miracle of resurrection had been wrought for Him.

This certainly seems an inadequate explanation of so great a fact as the planting of Christianity in the world, but nevertheless the swoon theory is intensely interesting in that it brings us to closer quarters with the argument. To the whole-hearted believer of the Bible it presents a most peculiar anomaly. The sceptic puts forward an extraordinary and far-fetched theory merely to account for less than a twentieth part of the evidence. The suggestion that Christ swooned and recovered would only at the most offer a doubtful explanation of the first claim that He had risen. It does not touch the case of the Apostle Paul, who is incontestably the strongest of the direct witnesses; it does not touch the evidence of the Jewish Scriptures, which yield an oblique support to the claims of Jesus far stronger than any direct testimony could be; and it does not touch the evidence to be drawn from the book of Revelation, which claims to come from Christ after His Ascension to Heaven. Why such a far-fetched theory to account for so small a portion of the evidence?

It will be easy at least to make any reader understand our statement that the evidence of the strongest direct witness is not touched by this suggested explanation.

The Apostle Paul's support comes at a later period than that which is affected by the swoon theory. The claim is put forth that he saw the Lord Jesus in glory by special manifestation from Heaven, and heard from the Lord direct the words of reproof that turned him from being the most zealous of opponents and made him the most zealous of champions.

The testimony of the Apostle Paul is particularly strong because we have very definite statements in the Epistles referring to the familiar fact of his conversion and emphasising his testimony. Surely it is obvious that in a letter we come more closely into touch with the writer than when we read of him in a record from the pen of another.

The fact is, no one disputes the honesty of the first Christians. They had no temporal advantage to gain by their teaching. On the contrary, they had much to lose. The Epistles that have come down to us in particular bear evidence of perfect sincerity. In dealing with some of these Epistles, however, there is no possibility of compromise. Either they are the letters of the men whose names they bear, telling the truth as far as it was known, or they are the most outrageous frauds in all literature.

It is obvious that there is a distinction between such personal letters and an impersonal history. One who attempts to give an account of a great movement in which many characters have taken part, even with the best of intentions and with the exercise of meticulous care, may nevertheless fall into some errors. His record of the words and actions of the leading character may be

misleading despite the most genuine efforts to keep it accurate. The historian and the biographer must in some measure rely on hearsay, and sometimes they are tempted to fill in gaps with the aid of imagination. When, however, we have a letter from one of the leading characters we come more directly into contact with the real man. We hear what he has to say, not merely what he is reported to have said.

In the first letter to the Corinthians, and in the letter to the Galatians, the writer comes before us as a witness quite as distinctly as if he were with us in the flesh and we were able to question him. In one sense he comes before us even more definitely. His letters have been before the world for many centuries, subject to a fierce light of criticism, and thus they have been put to a test greater than can be imposed upon a witness during a short period of cross-examination.

In both of these letters to which we refer, the claim is made in the most definite manner that the writer is the Apostle Paul. In both of them reference is made to the well known fact that he has been a persecutor of the Church. In both the writer emphasises the claim that he was converted by a miraculous intervention.

The witness comes forward claiming to be the Apostle Paul. We ask: "Are you the Paul referred to in the official records of the Christian movement? The man who was a persecutor and a defamer?"

He answers. "Yes. You have heard of my conversation in times past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it."¹

"I am the least of the Apostles and not fit to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the Church of God."²

We ask: "By what means were you converted? Was it a matter of theory and abstruse argument which changed your opinion?" He answers: "No." It was a matter of fact, the fact well known to the Christians that Christ rose from the dead; everything depended on that. "If Christ did not rise our faith is vain, and those who have fallen asleep are perished."

He rehearses some of the evidences of this fact.

"Christ rose according to the Scriptures. He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; afterwards he was seen of over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the majority remain to the present time although some have fallen asleep. . . . Last of all He was seen of me also as of one born out of due time; for I am the least of the Apostles and am not meet to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the Church of God."

In writing to the Galatians he refers to the well known facts regarding his one-time antagonism to the Church and his conversion by direct revelation from God, and he confirms his testi-

mony with an oath. "Behold, before God in the things that I write unto you I lie not."

Will anyone venture to say that before God the Apostle did lie? Or that the writer of the Epistle was not the Apostle Paul but an unknown writer who was lying throughout?

If an opponent will not venture to make such a statement; if he will admit that the writer of these Epistles was the Apostle Paul, telling the truth so far as he knew it, then surely it must also be conceded that we have an excellent witness. A man whose early training and prejudice and whose entire temporal interests were against the new religion was converted and became the most zealous advocate, thus inevitably bringing upon himself the anger and hatred of former friends, and holding the prospect of no advantage whatever if the new religion should prove untrue.

And this remarkable conversion was brought about, not by any process of reasoning, but simply through the fact that Paul saw and heard the Lord Jesus—or at least thought that this was the case—in a direct revelation given under such circumstances as would seem to eliminate every possibility of fraud or error.

The evidence of the first witnesses to the resurrection of Christ was sufficiently strong to induce some modern sceptics of repute to put forth the swoon theory, which is surely rather fantastic and far-fetched. What other theory shall we suggest to account for the case of the Apostle Paul?

He may be described as an enthusiast, even a fanatic. It may be said that he was an extreme instance of a type of man we sometimes encounter even now. One who, having formed a conviction which seems to him of supreme importance, will subordinate everything to the one idea. It is true that we have encountered men of this type; but they do not help us to understand the conversion of the Apostle Paul on rationalistic principles. Invariably the men who hold to an idea so tenaciously are extremely difficult to convert, and when they do change their minds they are able to explain exactly what it was that convinced them. Paul was of the same character when he "persecuted the Church and wasted it." What converted him? He tells us repeatedly that it was not through conferring with flesh and blood but by direct revelation from heaven. He had "seen the Lord," and he confirms this fact with a solemn oath.

In the foundation of the Christian religion, therefore, we have not mere matters of opinion and theory, but testimony as to one supreme fact. We come closely into touch with direct witnesses who had nothing to gain and much to lose in their insistent claim that Christ was raised from the dead, and who gave the most convincing evidence of their sincerity. Something extraordinary had occurred to persuade them of this unexpected event, and to endow them with a courageous confidence strong enough to revolutionise the thought of the world. Yet if the unbeliever,

attempting to face the facts, suggests a far-fetched and unconvincing explanation of the first report he finds that his theory fails to touch the case of the strongest witness.

We do not suggest that an unbeliever ought to be convinced by this evidence alone. All that we ask is that he should take full note of it, and, making it into a neat mental parcel, put it on the shelf of memory alongside of the argument drawn from the history of the Jews.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNWILLING WITNESSES.

In the last chapter it was stated that "the Jewish Scriptures yield an oblique support to the claims of Jesus far stronger than any direct testimony could be."

Perhaps this assertion requires a little explanation, for many people, even devout Christians, have never taken the trouble to understand the matter fully.

Almost everyone will agree that the indirect evidence of an unwilling witness is generally more interesting and often more effective than the most explicit of direct testimony. Unimpeachable witnesses may declare that they saw the prisoner under certain circumstances; but there is always the feeling that they may possibly be mistaken, however positively they speak. If, however, we surprise the most complete admission from the unwilling lips of the prisoner's friends, the confirmation is unmistakable.

This is just the kind of evidence that we can draw from the Old Testament Scriptures. Those Scriptures were written by Jews; they have been in the custody of Jews, and if they were the work of unaided men they would merely express the opinions of Jews. There would be nothing to favour the claims of Jesus.

This line of argument perhaps needs rather careful explanation, because many readers have been confused either by foolish and illogical talk about "internal and external evidence," or by the mere fact that the various books of the Bible are now bound in a single volume.

We once knew a young man who objected to the argument on the grounds that "even in a novel we have hints in the early part of the story which only become intelligible in the light of the conclusion."

This is a good illustration to make our point clear. It is true that in a work of fiction—especially in a mystery story—there are many suggestions thrown out which even practised readers cannot understand until the *denouement* makes all clear. Then they may feel surprised at their own obtuseness in failing to see the significance of those early hints. The reason that we find these adumbrations interwoven with the structure of such a story is that the author knew from the beginning how matters would turn out at the end.

The truth regarding Christ was a mystery kept secret from the foundation of the world. Who was the author who knew what the end would be, and who could thus give hints which, though stimulating to the minds of readers, only became clear in the light of the *denouement*?

The Bible is a collection of books written at widely different times and by men of greatly varying character. The Old Testament is essentially Jewish, and the Jews reject Jesus. The Jews have been custodians of their Scriptures from the beginning, and probably no other book has been so efficiently guarded against interpolation. If any Christian had been impious enough to attempt to insert into the sacred writings any passages to favour the cause of Christianity, the Jews would have exposed the fraud immediately. If any Jew had been impious enough to delete from the sacred writings a passage favourable to the claims of Jesus, the Christians would have detected the sacrilege.

Beyond all question it is true that if the Bible does not come from God the Old Testament comes merely from Jews, reflecting Jewish opinions and Jewish hopes. If anything is found therein to favour the claims of Jesus it is only a coincidence—a mere chance.

It may be urged that there was the possibility of New Testament writers moulding their record of the life of Jesus to accord with ancient prophecies. We quite agree that those many details for which we are entirely dependent in the New Testament cannot well be cited in evidence. But, as we pointed out in the preceding chapter, there are certain broad facts which stand out clearly in history and have to be accepted by believer and unbeliever alike.

The most majestic character who ever appeared among the Jews came at a time when the Messiah was expected, but instead of a national deliverance there followed a national catastrophe. The great Teacher was rejected and crucified, and the nation repudiates him to this day.

The Messiah was expected at the time that Jesus appeared. Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks would be sufficient to excite such a hope in the minds of earnest Jews, even though they regarded the prediction as obscure and difficult. It was admittedly one of those periods in which there was a lively anticipation of the advent of a great deliverer. The Disciples of Christ formed the conviction that He was the one to effect this national salvation, and although their faith was doubtless tried by many incidents during the period of preaching it was not overthrown until the Master was slain. Then a little later the report spread that He had risen from the dead; He had been seen first by one, then by another, and then by many together. Finally the great opponent and persecutor of the Church came humbly to them, seeking their aid, with the confession that while

on an errand of persecution he had seen the Lord Jesus and heard from Him direct the commands to fix the principles of a lifetime.

Try for a moment to realise how such men would be stimulated to read the Scriptures afresh with a new interest and a keener apprehension. They found many passages which made them wonder at their own former blindness and the "blindness which had happened to Israel" as a whole in the reading of their Scriptures. Passages which had only conveyed the assurance of an ultimate glory became charged with a new meaning, just as the conclusion of a cleverly written mystery story renders clear all the hints of the earlier chapters. Even readers who have been on the alert for a surprise nevertheless may be taken unawares, but in the light of the conclusion they exclaim, "Why did we not see that before?"

Whether or not it is true that Jesus expounded to His disciples "all things that were written" concerning Him, it is certain that appeals were soon made to the Scriptures. The disciples thought they saw clear evidence that there were to be two advents of the Messiah, one in weakness and one in power, with a period of waiting at the right hand of God between the two events. They thought that they found unmistakable indications in their Scriptures that the Messiah was to be rejected by His own people, that He was to be given as a light to the Gentiles and not to be accepted by Israel as a whole until the second advent in power and glory. They thought they saw in His sacrifice the substance of all that had been shadowed and hinted in the law and the prophets from the sacrifice of Eden to provide a garment, to the definite prophecies of Zechariah.

The Jews as a whole, rejecting Jesus, were compelled to repudiate these interpretations of their Scripture, and Gentile rejectors of all degrees are under a similar obligation. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that there was no possibility of collusion between the writers of the Old Testament and the disciples of Christ. If God did not in any way move the ancient prophets to write their testimony, the Old Testament Scriptures are the expressions of Jews writing for Jews, and any passages favourable to the claims of Jesus must be attributed merely to chance.

To do them justice, the more intelligent of sceptics fully recognise this fact, and much effort has been put forth to explain the prophecies of the Old Testament which have been applied by Christians to the sufferings of Christ.

One complained not long ago that the subject had been discussed *ad nauseam*, and he seemed to think that was a reason for taking no further notice of it. Our present purpose, however, is to explain the obstinacy of the last defenders, and this object could not be achieved without taking careful note of this line of argument. There is certainly no need for a sceptic to

grow angry at the recitation of these passages, especially if he is confident that he has found a rational explanation for them all in harmony with his unbelief.

First then, for a moment, consider the prophecy of Daniel. The sceptics will admit that the writer was a Jew, although they seek to prove that his prophecy was produced at a later age than is assigned for it by tradition. It is part of the Hagiographa according to Jewish classification, and it was certainly well established as having a place in the sacred Scripture of Israel long before the beginning of the Christian era.

In the ninth chapter of this book there is an account of a prayer, the rare beauty of which will be recognised by everyone who has an appreciation of the magic of words. At the conclusion of the prayer the angel Gabriel, being caused "to fly swiftly," reached the prophet with a message of love and a great revelation.

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three score weeks and two weeks, the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself, and the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."

We can imagine the unbeliever becoming impatient at this recitation and saying, "Surely the man has heard of the destructive criticism of this prophecy! Surely he knows that the traditional Christian interpretation has been shaken to its foundations."

Of course we know of the objections that have been raised by opponents of various grades. If there had been no difficulty, if it had been impossible to shake the orthodox Christian interpretation in any of its details, the battle with unbelief would have been over long ago, scepticism killed by this single example of prophecy. Instead of having an argument good enough to take its place in our accumulating store on the shelf of memory, we should have a complete demonstration to resist which would be simply silly. Instead of the argument being analogous to a single point of coincidence in the effort to identify a certain man, it would be like a complete confession from the accused himself.

All we wish to point out here is that after making the most generous concessions to the claims of the critics there is still enough significance in this passage to make one of those mental

parcels to be given due weight in our final view of the whole subject. And reasonable men will recognise that the thorough-going Bible believers cannot be expected to go so far with the critics in their determination to accept any kind of explanation rather than admit that God inspired the prophet.

We are not unfair in passing this remark. Incontestably it is true that our treatment of evidence in detail is profoundly affected by our general convictions. Everyone can see how this principle works when the personal interest and the strongest of prejudices are touched. We may have a friend in whom we repose implicit confidence. When he is accused of a horrible crime we repudiate the charge with scorn and indignation. We feel to know that he is incapable of any base action. His enemies put the worst possible construction on all his movements because they think he is a scoundrel. We put the best possible construction on them, for we believe he is a saint. Certain suspicious facts are brought to light and the accused gives the most fantastic and unconvincing explanation of them. We are quite honest in accepting his story and arguing strenuously for it, but it is not the logic of his explanations that convinces us. We are mainly influenced by the original conviction that he is innocent and that consequently all his actions must be explained in harmony with this fact. If, however, the points against him multiply to such an extent that our faith wavers, we begin to see all the evidence in a different light, and perchance call to mind many circumstances in the past which we never noticed at the time, but which unmistakably indicate that he was leading a double life.

Even where personal interests are not touched the same principle prevails. Indeed, there is hardly any other subject that causes such strong feeling as religious controversy or that has been the cause of so much unfair statement on both sides of the argument.

Try for a moment to pass an absolutely unprejudiced judgment on the question. If the Book of Daniel had been solely in the custody of Christians, with no evidence for its existence before the end of the first century, would any opponent of Christianity have doubted for a moment that the ninth chapter of the prophecy related to Jesus? Surely it must be admitted that in such a case all would have agreed as to the meaning of the words. The unbeliever would have cited the exactness of the details as an additional reason for assigning a late origin for the book just as he does with regard to the Macedonian prophecy. The completeness of the prediction would have been conceded freely, and the whole book would have been denounced as a Christian fraud. It is precisely because the book comes from Christian enemies, and we cannot on natural lines expect to find anything favourable to His cause, that such desperate efforts have been made to find another meaning for its words. By saying this we do not mean

to bring any accusation of dishonesty against either the open enemies of the Bible or unbelieving Christians. There can be no doubt that the recognition of inspiration leads to startling conclusions which many people find unbelievable. They would quite honestly accept almost any explanation of a prophecy rather than that it revealed a superhuman knowledge on the part of the writer, just as we would believe the most fantastic explanation of our trusted friend rather than admit that we were mistaken in him.

Let us try to avoid being unduly prejudiced either way. We will not say that the ninth chapter of Daniel is a plain prophecy regarding Jesus which all honest men must recognise; neither will we say that it is plainly nothing of the kind and all sensible men must agree.

If we first take the words as they appear in our Authorised Version of the Scriptures we have the following facts.

There is a definite prophecy that Messiah the Prince would appear after sixty-nine weeks from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem. That would be literally a period of four hundred and eighty-three days, but according to the usual style of prophetic language would mean four hundred and eighty-three years.

If the objector should deny the reasonableness of this interpretation and try to insist on a literal number of weeks he would find himself hoist on his own petard. In explaining other of Daniel's prophecies he is bound to represent that the writer lived at least a century after the traditional date. In that case a literal period of seventy weeks would have expired long before the book was produced. Surely no one will think that the author made an elaborate prophecy which had already been falsified fifty years before his book was written!

It must be agreed in common honesty that whatever view we take of the book we must acknowledge the chances to be a thousand to one that the day for a year principle was intended in its time periods. This method of symbolising time was enunciated in the early history of the Jews by Moses,¹ it was again explicitly stated to be a feature of prophecy in the days of Ezekiel,² and it is in harmony with the general method of the book of Daniel, which used beasts to represent empires and horns for kings and rulers.

On this principle the Messiah was to appear four hundred and eighty-three years after the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, while a period of seventy weeks or, in plain language, four hundred and ninety years, was to cover all the matters mentioned by the angel in verse 24.

The orthodox view is to date the period from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, when Nehemiah received permission to go to Jerusalem. But even if that is disputed, it is difficult to see how

(1) Numbers, xiv., 34. (2) Ezekiel, iv. 6.

the objector can assign a beginning which will assist him. The first decree of Cyrus was only for the building of the temple. It was not until the reign of Artaxerxes that the decree went forth for the building of the wall. The most honest and reasonable course for the rejector to take is to admit that Daniel's prophecy required the Messiah to come at the time when Jesus appeared, and this was the main reason why devout Jews were on the lookout for Him. Such a rejector would regard the attitude of the first disciples as directly related to this general expectation. The fact that the most majestic character in Jewish history appeared just at this time would be regarded as a mere coincidence.

So far there would be no great difficulty for the sceptic, If, however, he made this concession, he would immediately be confronted with a series of other facts which would be rendered so much more significant by this first reasonable admission.

The angel is represented as mentioning several matters to be comprehended within the total period of four hundred and ninety years. "To finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy."

These are Christian doctrines which only become intelligible in the light of later revelation. What are they doing in a Jewish book and in connection with the most definite promise of the Messiah that the Scriptures of the Jews contain? Surely the natural impulse of a Jewish writer would be to associate the advent of Messiah the Prince with the glory of Israel as in most of the prophecies. There is not a reference to the glory here. Why? The Christian "simpleton's" answer to this question is that this prediction with its definite time periods related to the first coming of the Messiah in weakness to "make an end of sin and to make reconciliation for iniquity." He also sees a special significance in the phrase "to seal up the vision and prophecy." If it is right to connect this with the prophecy of Isaiah viii., which deals with the same matter, it is certainly worthy of special note.

If, however, the Christian is completely mistaken, if the writer of Daniel was only an unaided Jew who had never seen an angel and who knew no more than other men, why was it that in telling the tale of an angel giving him a message that Messiah the Prince was soon coming he said nothing regarding the national deliverance for which the oppressed Jews sighed, but said much regarding matters in which the Jews were not interested but which are essential features of Christianity?

Next we come to the prophecy, "After three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off but not for himself."

Instantly the critics are to the front with assurances that this is a wrong translation.

We quite admit that there is something to be said against the rendering "not for Himself," but it is not easy to find a translation to bring the passage into harmony with the general trend of Israelitish thought.

It has been suggested that "cut off" should be rendered "covenanted with." What then? The very sign of the Israelitish covenant was a cutting off of flesh, surely emblematic of this matter of "making an end of sin." A student of the Bible finds his mind vibrant with so many thoughts in this connection that it is impossible to explain them all. He thinks of the Abrahamic covenant; the insistence on circumcision (significant of the cutting off of sin's flesh) as an absolutely essential condition of the covenant. He thinks also of the child of promise, the offering of the first-born on Mount Moriah and the extraordinary significance of Jehovah-jireh.

If, however, the unbeliever satisfies himself regarding this matter, there is still another prediction for him to explain.

"The people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end shall be with a flood and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."

Why should a mere Jew write such words as these? The book of Daniel was unquestionably written while the Jews were in great distress and in much need of comfort. All their natural impulses would make them associate the coming of Messiah with a renovation of their nation and deliverance from their enemies. Yet in this the most definite of the predictions regarding the Anointed there is no mention of glory, there is much mention of Christian doctrines and there is the declaration that the city and the sanctuary should be destroyed by a people who should come to bring desolation instead of deliverance. Surely everyone will remember that the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans, one of the most appalling tragedies in history, follows shortly after the repudiation of Christ by the Jews. The city and the temple were destroyed and desolations have followed exactly as the prophet declared, but exactly contrary to all that a Jew would have expected as the outcome of his Messiah's appearance.

It cannot be doubted that if such a prophecy had been solely in the custody of Christians everyone would have recognised its applicability to Christ and the unbeliever would have denounced it as a palpable Christian fraud. As it cannot be so treated, as the prophecy was written by a Jew for Jews and was accepted as part of the sacred Scriptures of Israel, it must by the same tokens be recognised as a palpable piece of Christian evidence. Even after taking the fullest note of all that has been urged against it, at the very least it makes a significant parcel for our shelf.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNWILLING WITNESSES (Continued).

After the general consideration of the phase of the argument in the last chapter, we may pass under rapid review the various other prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures which have been the subject of controversy.

In the one hundred and tenth Psalm there is a prophecy which is referred to in the New Testament as applying directly to Christ. Jesus only quoted the first part of it with the object of showing that the Messiah was to be more than a mere man.

“The Lord said unto my lord sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” If David called him Lord, how is he then his son?

If it be granted that David was the author of the Psalm, and that the prophecy related to the Messiah who was to come, the argument was a good one. Among the Jews there was far more respect for parents than we find in modern Gentile lands, and the title lord applied by an Israelitish king to any of his descendants would indicate something quite exceptional in the one so addressed. There are some more significant features of this prophecy which Christ did not quote and which at once challenge the antagonism of one who repudiates the special claims of the Bible. He is practically compelled to deny that it refers to the Messiah at all.

We remember the contention of an objector who made some claims to learning, that a slight knowledge of Hebrew would convince anyone that the Psalm was simply an address to one of the Maccabees and that it had no reference to the Messiah.

This argument is not quite honest. It is painfully reminiscent of old and discredited methods which have too often been employed on the Christian side. Many theologians have attempted to shelter behind their learning, and with terrifying sentences, freely interloaded with adjectives, have sought to establish their positions by branding their opponents as “unlearned and ignorant men.”

It must in honesty be admitted that a knowledge of Hebrew does not insure unanimity of opinion any more than any other kind of learning.

There have doubtless been instances of poems which were only intended to have a local and contemporary application being given an extended meaning by editors, but there have been still more instances of great and enduring poems being so edited as to be given a topical significance far removed from the intention of the original writer.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the coming of a great deliverer. The sceptic has a right to claim that this is only natural, especially among people who were often in trouble and who needed the comforting assurance that some day a hero would come to deliver them. The Christian has a right to point out there would be a natural tendency to apply the prophecy to each successive leader as he appeared, and such application is no evidence of the prophet's intention.

The point of the argument is that the prophecy is different from anything that might have been expected in a merely human expression of national aspirations, and yet in these peculiar details it fits the case of Jesus exactly.

All attentive readers will notice that there is a difference in the type used for Lord, indicating different words in the original. The Psalm begins, "The LORD said unto my Lord." The Covenant name is used as indicated by the capitals, "Jehovah said unto my Adon, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

What man, however great his eminence, was to sit at the right hand of Jehovah waiting till his foes should be made his footstool? How could such a prediction be fulfilled?

It is easy to understand the first disciples calling this Psalm to mind when they became convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead and taken to Heaven. Here was the explanation of the one who was to rule in Zion being addressed by Jehovah in such a manner; here was the explanation of this period of waiting at the right hand of God, an idea which seemed utterly unintelligible in connection with any other man.

The Psalm goes on to declare, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"—surely implying a day of weakness in which they would not be willing, and very significant in view of that period of waiting for the manifestation of power.

Finally there is the assurance to this Lord of the Psalmist, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." If the great ruler referred to was to come of the tribe of Judah (and that is the most probable assumption despite the suggestion regarding the Maccabees), for him to be a priest would involve a change in the law, for priests under the law were of the tribe of Levi. Again there is a perfect harmony of ideas. Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest. He was described in the book

(1) Genesis. xiv., 18.

of Genesis as "king of Salem, the priest of the most high God."¹ He was obviously superior to the Levitical order of priests.

A further point of interest is brought out in the narrative of Genesis xiv. When Abraham first met this priest of the most high God and received from him a blessing, Melchizedek "brought forth bread and wine." Assuredly no refreshments were needed for the young men who were with Abraham. They had been successful and had taken a great spoil. Abraham refused to keep any of the treasure thus secured "except what the young men had eaten." It cannot be reasonably doubted that they would have enough food and wine and to spare. This priest of the most high God, coming forth to bless the father of the faithful, offered no animal sacrifice, as was usual since the days of Abel, but he brought forth just the symbols which have been employed since by the great antitype—bread and wine. Surely the Christian may be excused for regarding this as a finishing touch of harmony to put the interpretation of the Psalm beyond reasonable doubt. The great deliverer was to be lord of the Psalmist, a priest of this high order with its unusual symbols, a king of Salem as well as a priest. His people were to be unwilling in a day of weakness, He was to be exalted to sit at the right hand of Jehovah, waiting for the time when He should rule in the midst of His enemies and His people should be willing in the day of His power.

There is the one obvious objection to this interpretation of a passage in the Jewish Scriptures. To admit this meaning is to admit inspiration. If, therefore, we are convinced that the claim of the Bible to be inspired is untrue we must perforce find another explanation of such a passage as this, even though in a moment of candour it might be admitted that the Christian view sounded more plausible.

We would ask again, however, if this prophecy had come solely out of the custody of Christians, would any sceptic have doubted that it was a skilfully worded reference to Christ, evidently produced after the beginning of the Christian era, and a palpable fraud?

Well, we will not urge the point. Remember the details and put this parcel on the shelf of memory with the others.

In the book of Isaiah there is a prophecy which is applied to Christ in the New Testament, but which has been the subject of so much controversy that we will not emphasise it. "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign, behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and shall call his name Immanuel."

This has been regarded by Christians as a prophecy of the virgin birth, while the name Immanuel, meaning God with us, has been recognised as strictly applicable to Christ, and indeed quite unintelligible apart from the light of the New Testament teaching.

Those who reject Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, claim that the Hebrew word *Almah* may mean simply a young woman, and that Immanuel was one of Isaiah's sons, no particular significance being attached to the meaning of his name.

It may be even as these critics say; we will not argue the question beyond confessing that the various points of their contention do not seem very convincing. We can find no instance in the Old Testament of the word *Almah* being applied to a married woman, and in some cases it appears to refer to quite a young girl, as in the case of the sister of the infant Moses.

We cannot quite see how a son being born to a young married woman could be regarded as a "sign." Surely it is one of the most ordinary events of human life. If a healthy young woman is married to a healthy man we expect her to have children. Among Jewish women particularly it was regarded as a terrible misfortune to be sterile, a sign, perhaps, of divine displeasure. But for a young married woman to have a son was no sign at all. Why then the declaration in connection with this matter, "the Lord Himself shall give you a sign"?

Finally we would remark that if Isaiah indeed had a son, the subject of special prophecy and with a name meaning "God with us," it is surely extraordinary that nothing is written regarding the history of his life.

In any case, however, it should be remembered that the prophets of Israel were described as "men of sign."¹ Ezekiel was a sign to his contemporaries even in his domestic sorrows.² Isaiah was a sign to the people of his day, and experiences of his private life might in accordance with the principles enunciated in his book have a meaning far beyond the immediate connections.³

In the light of these facts consider the following passages from chapter viii., verses 13 to 17. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself and let Him be your fear and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and snared and taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob and I will look for Him."

To whom could the title Lord of hosts be applied except to the Creator Himself?

Perhaps the captain of the angelic host of whom we read in the book of Exodus might be so described, for God is represented as saying, "My name is in him," but we read of no man in Old Testament history who could be called by such a name.⁴ The Jews would have felt outraged at the bare suggestion.

(1) Zech., iii., 8, see margin. (2) Ezekiel, xii., 2, xxiv., 16-22. (3) Isaiah, xx.

(4) Exodus, xxxiii., 21.

There are some Old Testament prophecies, however, regarding the great king and deliverer who was to come which give to Him such titles. Note, for instance, the very definite prophecy in the twenty-third chapter of Jeremiah regarding the righteous branch which was to grow up unto David. "In His days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is the name whereby He shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." It is evident that this king who is to reign and prosper and deliver Judah and Israel must be the Messiah. Here the covenant name Jehovah is applied to Him. Surely it cannot be applied to any other man either by Jew or Christian!

What, then, is the meaning of these words appearing in the sacred writings of the Jews, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts and let Him be your fear, . . . and He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel"?

Who is it who is represented as saying, "Seal the law among my disciples and I will wait upon God that hideth His face from the house of Israel"?

If these words had appeared in a prophecy which was only found among Christian writings, who would have doubted the meaning? Christ is the LORD of righteousness. Christ can be called LORD of hosts. Christ is a sanctuary or place of safety for those who come to Him. Christ has been a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to the Jews. Christ went to wait upon God, even the Father during a period in which the divine face is hidden from the house of Israel.

The prophecy fits the case of Jesus exactly, especially having regard to all the circumstances of its setting. What other explanation can be suggested from the Jewish point of view and consistent with a repudiation of inspiration? If you think that it was the prophet who was to wait upon God and that in some way his sons are the immediate subjects of his prophecy, it will be well to note the statement which follows the words we have quoted. "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders." Here is a re-emphasis of this principle of the prophets being men of sign directly in connection with these remarkable words. Surely the most determined of unbelievers must be able in some measure to see the force of the argument and to sympathise with the Christian's point of view.

We have endeavoured to state the case with forbearance and moderation, even at the risk of making some Christian stalwarts regard us as timid defenders yielding too much to the prejudices of unbelief. The writer is quite conscious of the fact that there is much more in this prophecy than he has yet exhibited. It is difficult, however, to make a further elaboration of the argument intelligible to those who have not made a life study of the subject. It may be possible to carry it a stage further by first dealing with

the prophecy of Zechariah and then turning back to Isaiah for purpose of comparison.

In the New Testament record of the death of Christ reference is made to the prophecy, "they shall look on Him whom they pierced." The quotation is evidently from the twelfth chapter of Zechariah, and thus, occurring in the Jewish Scriptures, it challenges attention as a piece of Christian evidence. Does the connection in which this prophecy appears justify the interpretation put upon it by the evangelist?

Unfortunately the views generally held in Christendom have often been so little in sympathy with Bible teaching that the unbeliever has been able to play off one prejudice against another and to escape from the obligation to explain a difficult passage simply because it presented equal difficulties to the average theologian.

We remember a sceptic who, on having his attention drawn to this prophecy in the Jewish Scriptures, thought it was quite enough to point out the connection of ideas. Evidently he supposed that the associations would be so repugnant to a Christian that the argument would be dropped immediately on the setting of the text being brought to light. As a matter of fact, the prophecy becomes immeasurably more significant when it is comprehended as a whole.

It is impossible for a real believer in the whole Bible to doubt that there is to be a real restoration of Israel. The very attempts of some theologians to escape from this conclusion have led them into methods of exposition so palpably dishonest that at last the effort has been abandoned.

Figures of speech are used in the Bible, but they are intelligible figures. It is simply absurd to pretend that when Jewish prophets spoke of the future glories of Jerusalem they meant the spiritual glories of the Christian Church. The effort to maintain such an artificial style of interpretation led the "spiritualising" theologians into the most grotesque unfairness. They treated all the denunciations and predictions of evil as referring to the real Zion and the real Jerusalem, and all the prophecies of good things as referring to themselves. In many cases, however, the prophecies of ultimate blessing are so closely connected with the denunciation for past offences that they cannot be separated even by the most prejudiced and unscrupulous of expositors.

Zion was to be ploughed as a field,¹ and Jerusalem was to become heaps on account of the iniquity of the people, but in the last days the house of the Lord is to be established there and the law and the word of the Lord are to go forth from Zion and Jerusalem, bringing peace to all mankind.²

(1) Micah, iii., iv. (2) Micah, iv., 3.

The very people who have been scattered are to be gathered by God.¹ As God has watched over them to root out and destroy, so will He watch over them to build and to plant.² As they have been a curse among the heathen, so they will be a blessing.³ The land that has been desolate is to be inhabited, and the cities which have been broken down are to be rebuilt.⁴

In these days many theologians treat the Bible with far more candour though with less show of reverence than was manifested by their predecessors. It has been freely admitted, even by many who do not believe in the second coming of Christ, that the ancient prophecies cannot be fulfilled without it. Some have gone further and have agreed that the early disciples of Christ looked for the establishment of a real kingdom and a literal restoration without any of the more popular conceptions that have been learned from Gentile culture.⁵

To the present writer it seems incomprehensible that anyone who really studies the Bible can come to any other conclusion. The rejection by Christians of the prophecies regarding Messiah's glorious kingdom seems like a mysterious blindness, worse than "the blindness that has happened to Israel" in rejecting the prophecies regarding His suffering.

Once recognise that the prediction regarding the future king of Israel are to be taken in the only sense which would make them intelligible to the Jews for whom they were written, and it will be seen that the prophecy of Zechariah is in harmony with all the others.

All the prophets who have written of these things agree in declaring that Jacob will have a special time of trouble just before the final deliverance.

Ezekiel describes the restoration as resembling the resurrection of dry bones,⁶ a gradual development until an army of living men is produced. In this connection he declares that "in the latter days"⁷ a great confederacy of enemies will come from the North to overwhelm the early colonisers of the renovated land, and it will be in this extreme of distress that God will again reveal His power on behalf of His ancient people.⁸

The prophet Daniel declares that in "the time of the end" the king of the North will come against the land and "plant his tabernacle in the glorious holy mountain."⁹ And then Michael (who like God) will stand up for His people and deliver them.

The prophet Joel says that "at that day and that time," when God brings again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, He will gather the nations into the valley of Jehoshaphat and plead with them there.¹⁰ There will be a great preparation for war among the Gentiles, "ploughshares beaten into swords and pruning hooks

(1) Jeremiah, xxx., 10. (2) Jeremiah, xxxi., 28. (3) Zech., viii., 13. (4) Jeremiah, xxxiii., 12-15.

(5) See Luke i., 32-33; Matthew, xix., 28; Matthew, xxv., 31.

(6) Ezekiel, xxxvii. (7) Ezekiel, xxxviii. (8) Ezekiel, xxxviii., 18-23.

(9) Daniel, xi., 45. (10) Joel, iii.

into spears." Then the Lord will "roar out of Zion" for the deliverance of His people.

We might point out also, for the benefit of Christians, that in the New Testament the second coming of Christ is connected with wars and commotions as shown in the Mount Olivet prophecy, and still more definitely in the book of Revelation. Armageddon is connected with Christ's return; indeed, the sequence of thought is broken for a minute to interject the warning, "Behold I come as a thief, blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments."¹

The late Lord Kitchener, who at one time assisted in surveying the land of Palestine, spoke of the plain of Esdraelon as "the greatest battlefield in the world from the days of Joshua."² And he adds, "Here also is the ancient Megiddo where the last great battle of Armageddon is to be fought."

Incontestably Lord Kitchener was right in thus identifying this much-abused name with the great battlefield of Palestine. Armageddon simply means Hill of Megiddo. Scores of prophecies agree in representing that as the spot where God will once again manifest His power and save Jacob from the time of unprecedented trouble. The prophecy of Zechariah is one of them, and no real believer in the Bible ought to experience a moment's difficulty in understanding it.

Jerusalem is to be a burdensome stone to all nations, "but all who burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."³

The Lord shall "save Judah" and "defend Jerusalem." He will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. He will "pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son and be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."⁴

There shall be a mourning in the land comparable to the mourning for righteous king Josiah who was slain at Megiddo. "The land shall mourn every family apart and their wives apart."⁵

Taking this prophecy strictly from the Jewish point of view, we would ask how can this complete deliverance of Israel be effected except by the coming of the great Anointed? When will the spirit of grace be poured upon them and all their enemies be overthrown except at the time when the great king shall come? But why, from the Jewish point of view, should there be a great lamentation through all the land on account of one they had pierced? Surely the great day of deliverance would be a time of supreme rejoicing and not of mourning.

(1) Rev., xvi., 14 16. (2) Address to Geographical Section of British Association.
(3) Zech., xii. (4) Zech. xii., 10. (5) Zech. xii., 11, 12.

Suppose for a moment, however, that this is one of those plain hints regarding the mystery kept secret from the foundation of the world; a hint comparable to those set forth by the skilful story writer who knows from the beginning what the end of the plot will be. In other words, suppose that the prophet Zechariah was not merely an unaided Jew writing for Jews, but that the spirit of God spake by him. Suppose that just before the great voice sounds from the temple in Heaven "All is over"¹ there is to be a fulfilment of the prophecy in the book of Revelation which immediately precedes that pronouncement. A great preparation for war, a gathering together of nations to Armageddon, and the thief-like advent of the Lord Jesus. How would the prophecy of Zechariah fit the case then?

The Jews are delivered from their enemies, they see the most convincing evidence that the great king has come at last, thousands of voices are ready to welcome the Messiah with a wild joy that can only come to those who, after years of oppression and disappointment, find complete deliverance just at the blackest hour of all.

And then the Deliverer reveals Himself as Jesus, the despised and rejected. They realise that they have pierced God in piercing His Son, and they mourn with bitter lamentation. The land mourns, not with the passionate anguish of a united nation in the face of national disaster, but with a more private grief in which there is an element of shame, "every family apart and their wives apart."

If this had been a Christian prophecy it would have been so easy to have understood it, and the unbeliever could have set it aside as a Christian fabrication. What shall we say of it in view of the fact that it is in the Scriptures of the Jews who reject Jesus? Why this description of mourning for one they have pierced just at the time of joyful deliverance?

Now turning back for a moment to the eighth chapter of Isaiah, we would like to point out that there is every reason to regard this as coming into line with the other prophecies, and having a direct reference to the final invasion of the land at the time of the end. The Assyrian, we are told, "shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." There is the assurance that Gentile powers shall be shattered and their counsel come to nothing, scheme how they will. In verse 10 Immanuel is mentioned again, but in the Authorised Version of the Bible His name is translated and its meaning rendered "for God is with us." Dr. Young, in his literal translation, restores the name to its proper position, and we have the far more significant explanation of the overthrow of the enemy who has filled the land. "Take counsel together and it shall come to naught. Speak the word and it shall not stand, because of Immanuel."

(1) Rev., xvi., 17.; Dr. Moffatt trans.

To the students of the Bible, among whom the writer of these lines was brought up, it seems certain that this eighth chapter of Isaiah refers to the final controversy in "the valley of Decision." The attempt of the unbeliever to make out that Immanuel was merely one of Isaiah's sons appears to them not only unreasonable but positively absurd.

There are one or two other passages of Scripture which are worthy of note as hinting at the mystery of the Atonement, though the connection of ideas is not sufficiently definite to make a powerful argument.

Psalm xxii., beginning "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is regarded by Christians as referring to the Messiah, but the main reason for this interpretation is that it is so applied in the New Testament. The passage "they pierced my hands and my feet" is interesting because it seems to be an unmistakable reference to crucifixion, and crucifixion was not a Jewish custom. The Psalm thus presents an idea foreign to the Jews, and yet singularly fitting the case of the One who immortalised it by quoting the opening words.

The passage in Zechariah xiii. regarding the one who was wounded in the hands in the house of his friends is not often cited. Indeed, considered as a prophecy regarding the meeting of the Lord Jesus with the Jews, the passage would be almost as offensive to the average Christian as to the average Jew. It is too real and mundane to be tolerated. This, however, is not a valid objection. If the verse can be considered as following the conclusion of chapter xii., it fits the case exactly, and we know of nothing against its intense reality. The true objection to the citation of this passage is that the preceding words are obscure and difficult to understand. From whatever point of view they are regarded, whether accepting or rejecting Christ, it seems impossible to establish a solid argument for any application we may suggest for these words.

We must point out, however, that the passage which immediately follows is very much more definite, and its presence in the writings of the Jews offers a challenge to those who reject Jesus.

"Awake, O sword, against the Shepherd, and against the man who is my fellow, saith the Lord, smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."

Who is the shepherd of Israel? Who is the man who is Jehovah's fellow? Who was to be smitten?

It seems as if the prophet in this chapter puts forth a few ideas little connected with each other, just as a poet will sometimes present his thoughts in a series of sketches, entailing considerable labour on the part of a reader to fill in the gaps and get at the meaning.

It is in the Old Testament Scriptures that we have the affirmation, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings to search out the matter."

The earnest student may therefore be excused for thinking that some of these Scriptures are worthy of at least as much patient endeavour to get at the meaning as we should accord to the fancies of a poet. Those who are uninterested will dismiss such passages impatiently. A student will repeat the question, "What did a Jewish prophet mean by the smiting of the shepherd and the man who is God's fellow?" He will ponder as to the meaning of the strange passage immediately preceding, and perhaps in the same questioning spirit he may retrace his steps through all the prophecies we have quoted, assigning to each its appropriate position on the shelf of memory.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHAPTER OF CHAPTERS.

Probably the critic who complained that the Messianic prophecies had been discussed *ad nauseam* would object most of all to the citation of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. That prophecy has received more attention than any other. It is the most complete and the most sustained of the forecasts in the Old Testament, and in some respects it is the most important as an argument in favour of revelation.

We do not think there can be any doubt that, however thoroughly this prophecy has been examined by some of the critics, there are thousands of men of the world who reject the claims of the Bible to be inspired by God without ever having looked at this argument. They have heard the words regarding the One on whom the sins of the world were to be laid, the one despised and rejected of men yet chosen by God for the pleasure of the Lord to prosper in His hand. They have heard that His soul was to be made an offering for sin, He was to be smitten for the transgression of God's people, yet eventually was to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. We are convinced, however, that in many cases careless and thoughtless rejectors do not know where these words are to be found. They would say, "Yes, of course, that is a Christian description and proves nothing." They would be surprised to learn that it was not Christian at all, but that it comes from the sacred writings of the Jews, who reject Christ. Many others who perhaps know where the prophecy originated have nevertheless failed to consider the significance of such words emanating from such a quarter. In plain logic, it has to be admitted either that the words were inspired by God or else they were the expressions of a Jew writing for Jews, and their fitting in with Christian foundations is merely a matter of chance.

This point is recognised by the leaders of sceptical thought, and great efforts have been made to find a rationalistic explanation of the prophecy. Probably some sceptics have felt satisfied with their suggestions, even though the Christian stalwart might regard them as desperate evasions so palpably forced and unreasonable that they could not carry an honest conviction even to the dispartants themselves. We need to make much allowance for

different points of view if we are going to understand those who oppose us.

Any broad-minded Christian should be able to understand the honesty of the unbeliever, and using the word in its proper sense should be capable of sympathising with him in his repudiation of revelation. There is very little chance of helping him without such an intelligent comprehension of his position. But, while it is narrow-minded and foolish to doubt the honesty of an opponent, it is well to take note of those prejudices and antipathies which tend to warp the judgment. The sceptic generally recognises the existence of such prejudices in the Christian, but fails to perceive that he is under any such influence himself.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in one of his many delightful essays, tells the story of a young atheist who challenged him to name a man of outstanding intellect who believed in the miraculous. On a formidable list being instantly supplied, the atheist made the surprising answer, "Oh, but of course they had to believe, for they were Christians."

We can understand what the young man meant. He had noticed in Christians that which he should have seen in all humanity. We are obliged to believe in certain details because of our main convictions. There are times when we are logically bound to accept conclusions which in themselves would not attract us because the only alternative is the repudiation of foundations which we regard as quite settled. If a Christian is logically bound to believe in a miracle or else to reject Christ, he may reasonably conclude that the mere prejudice of feeling against the miracle has no weight against the tremendous fact of Christ's position in history. If an atheist is logically bound either to reject an obvious interpretation of prophecy, or to admit the fact of inspiration, he is, to say the least, quite as stubborn as the Christian in his determination to bring everything into harmony with his main theory.

This natural tendency to reject any idea which seems to menace the security of our general convictions is quite reasonable so long as we do not carry it too far. It is obvious, however, that it often prevents us from seeing the true value of evidence, especially when the problem is to overcome scepticism of any kind.

To take a simple illustration. Suppose that while you are living in a quiet little English country town a savage lion, having broken loose from a menagerie some distance away, puts in an utterly unexpected appearance in the quiet streets. The bare idea of a lion being at large in such a locality may seem so wildly improbable that you resist the first evidences of his proximity without feeling the slightest doubt as to the soundness of your scepticism. When you first hear his roar you merely think that one of the little boys has succeeded in imitating a wild beast with

unusually nerve-racking success. When you hear the boy shout to his brother that there is a lion in the street which has just killed the policeman, you feel serenely confirmed in your impression that the children are having a game at "let's pretend," and the roar was a realistic overture to the play. When there is another roar and a neighbour's boy dives into the room through the open window, affirming that the lion has chased him, you begin to think that perhaps someone is frightening the boys and the joke is being carried too far. So the evidence may be traced through various stages—the testimony of adult neighbours, a report in the local paper, the discovery of the dead policeman, and perhaps, as a final demonstration, an encounter with the lion himself. Presumably this last piece of evidence would convince all but the most sceptical and self-satisfied of men. In every stage of this process, however, it is obvious that you are bound either to abandon your original scepticism or to reject the testimony of those who challenge it. It is clear, too, that when you are finally convinced of the main surprising fact, you will see the various points of evidence in a different light, and probably realise that you were foolishly prejudiced in your original judgment. Of course it was absurd to suppose that one of the children could have emitted that terrible roar. It was absurd to suppose that the terrified cry was only in a children's game. At the time of occurrence reason was blinded by the stolidity of the original scepticism. Now all the evidence appears in a different light.

We recognise that the same illustration might be so inverted as to reveal the prejudices of superstition. If a timid child felt convinced that there was a lion at large, he might see corroborative evidence in many incidents quite innocent of real menace. All we ask is that the universality of this human weakness shall be recognised. The Christian may accept certain traditions because he is "bound to" as a Christian. The sceptic may fail to see certain Christian evidence—may even refuse to look at it because he is bound to reject it as an atheist. He can believe that the earth was once a ball of fire and that all life and intelligence have evolved by blind chance, but he cannot believe that God produced a redeemer for the human race from among the Jews. He dismisses such an idea as unscientific and therefore impossible.

But while such a man is bound to repudiate our interpretation of the fifty third chapter of Isaiah so long as he remains an unbeliever, it may be possible to persuade him to look at the prophecy with sympathetic eyes, so as to understand the position of those who hold to the traditional view. That, for the moment, is all that we desire.

It cannot be doubted that the natural prejudice against prophecy has been increased by the attitude of some Christians. It is natural for a sceptic to feel that he is freed from any obligation to find an explanation of a prophecy if it is repudiated

by one whose sympathies would be supposed to be in its favour, just as the defence set up by a prisoner would seem to need little examination on the part of his accusers if his own wife said that it was nonsense.

It is very unsafe, however, to reason in this way. The name Christian is claimed by all sorts and conditions of men, from the hearty believer in the whole Bible to the man who would be an open opponent of Christ if it were not too much trouble. There are many theologians whose entire scheme of philosophy is so completely out of harmony with these prophecies that they approach the subject with quite as much bias against the traditional view as can be felt by any sceptic. There are others who are so determined to be original that they cannot tolerate any interpretation that is obvious and commonplace.

Try for a moment, however, to view this prophecy in its entire setting, as it appears to one who accepts the whole Bible, and ask yourself the question whether it seems reasonable or even possible that it can be applied to anyone other than the Messiah of Israel?

The Jews have put forward a theory that "the man of sorrows" is simply a personification of their nation, and the sacrifice referred to is the long drawn out tragedy of their history. Is this a reasonable suggestion? It is true that in chapter xlix one is represented as being prepared by God for the work of human redemption, and is addressed by the name of Israel. The context, however, shows clearly that the reference is really to an individual who is to "raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel."

In view of the special meaning attached to Bible names, it is natural and reasonable that the future king should be so addressed. In some prophecies He is called David—that is, the beloved. In this case under review He is called Israel, which means ruler with God. The father of the nation was originally named Jacob, which means a supplanter. There is a whole poem in the circumstances of his renaming which might almost lead us away from the main theme into a bypath of Christian evidence. Jacob, we are told, wrestled with an angel. He wrestled through the night seeking a blessing. When morning came the blessing was given and his name was changed to Israel "because as a prince he had power with God and man."

During the long night of Gentile darkness the Messiah, as the One Mediator, is wrestling with God for a blessing. When morning comes, even that "morning without a cloud," referred to in the last words of David, the one who was at one time "filled with iron and the staff of a spear"¹ will be the ruler with God over men. He will have secured the blessing for which He laboured, and in this connection He is appropriately addressed

(1) See II. Samuel, xxiii.

by God: "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

We cannot find space to elaborate the arguments suggested by these allusions, but an earnest student will be well repaid for a careful consideration of these passages.

Let the sceptic try to imagine the feelings of such a student when he is asked to believe that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah suddenly inverts this method of address and personifies the nation under the figure of a man. It is difficult to believe that those who put forth such an idea have any faith in it themselves. If the Jews can believe it, why is not the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah read in their synagogues? Why is it not the most popular chapter in all their Scriptures? Incontestably it is one of the most beautiful poems. If the man of sorrows is a personification of the nation it is immeasurably the most flattering chapter in the whole Bible!

In the first chapter of Isaiah the Jews are referred to as "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity," and they are compared with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. In chapter lxiv. the prophet says that all their righteousness was simply like filthy rags and their iniquities had laid hold of them and had taken them away. If the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah suddenly reverses this verdict and says that they are absolutely righteous, having done no evil and with mouth free from guile, it is by far the most flattering poem in the Bible! It is, in fact, too flattering to be believed. The real feeling of the Jews is revealed in the fact that this chapter remains probably the most unpopular in all their literature.

This incongruity, however, is only a small part of the case against this attempt to represent "the man of sorrows" as merely a personification of the nation. We should have to ask who are the people here represented as speaking, The prophetic poems of the Old Testament take a certain dramatic liberty as with other poems. Sometimes it is represented that God speaks; sometimes the chosen nation and then the prophet himself. But who ever heard of the Gentiles taking the leading part? What people are supposed to be speaking when we have the words, "All we like sheep have gone astray and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"? Who is the speaker when the prophecy declares "for the transgression of my people was he smitten"? Are we to conclude that the Gentiles are God's people after all, while the Jews, though perfectly righteous, have been subjected to a long period of sorrow and affliction, not because of their own sins, as Moses predicted, but to make atonement for the sins of the heathen?

There is no need, however, to argue this matter at greater length. No one who is capable of escaping from blinding prejudice will pretend that the personification theory is satis-

factory. What else has ever been suggested? Attempts have sometimes been made to show a want of harmony between the details of the prophecy and the New Testament account. In the fifty-second chapter of the prophecy we have the words, "His visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." It has been objected that this is not true of Jesus, for other men have had their countenances marred more.

Surely even a prophet may be allowed a measure of poetical license! It would be difficult to demonstrate with mathematical accuracy which was the most serious marring of a human countenance in all history. We may point out, however, that the marring of a visage does not mean the same as its destruction. Christ's form was marred more than the sons of men, for He was crucified, and this was not a custom among the Jews. If we think of Him with a crown of thorns pressed upon His brow and with such a trial of ignominy and pain imposed upon His exquisitely sensitive nature as to produce the effect described in Luke xxii. verse 44, surely we need little invocation of poetical license to justify the words of the prophet.

Then the critics have raised the objection that the man of sorrows is described as being dumb before his accusers, whereas in one of the Gospel records it is represented that Jesus spoke several times. Surely this is a futile type of criticism to bring against such a startling prophecy. It is true that Jesus answered when an oath was laid upon Him charging Him to do so. He made no attempt to defend Himself or to attack His accusers, and that is obviously the meaning of the prophet's declaration with its figure of a sheep before her shearers.

These are only matters of detail, however, for which we depend wholly on the Bible record. If we could convince the sceptic that all the details fitted perfectly, he would say that they were so adjusted by the writers of the New Testament. We would press the question as to the meaning of the main facts, for our knowledge of which we are not dependent on the Bible. That a great character arose among the Jews during the closing years of their commonwealth; that He proclaimed new doctrines of gentleness and non-resistance; that He was rejected by the nation as a whole and put to death; that a report of His resurrection spread abroad through all the earth; that millions of Gentiles have accepted Him while the Jews continue to reject Him to this day—these are facts which are as firmly established in history as the very existence of our own nation. How are we to interpret the prophecy of Isaiah in the light of them?

Come with us for a few seconds and try to see the point of view of the stalwart believer.

Throughout the prophecy of Isaiah there are references to the great deliverer who was to come. "A rod out of the stem of Jesse," one who should be of quick understanding, with a

knowledge of humanity independent of the judgment of eye and ear. In chapter xlix. He is represented as speaking, and in every particular the Lord Jesus whom we acknowledge as Christ answers the requirements of the prophecy. Jesus was the One who was "called from the womb." It was the very Word of God that called Him. He was the One who was made like a polished shaft with "mouth like a sharp sword." He has wrestled for a blessing for humanity during the long night of the world's sin, and He will come as ruler with God when the "morning without cloud" shall dawn.

Thus it is that according to this prophecy God immediately proceeds to address Him. "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.

"Thus saith the Lord the Redeemer of Israel His holy one to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship because of the Lord that is faithful and the holy One of Israel, and He shall choose thee."¹

Jesus has been given as a light to the Gentiles. Jesus has been despised by man and abhorred by the nation. How can these words be applied to any other? For what conceivable object can they have been written by an unenlightened Jew, writing for his own nation? The prophecy goes on to describe the deliverance of prisoners out of darkness and their establishment in a land where they shall hunger and thirst no more.

The chapter which immediately follows deals with the same subject, fitting in perfectly with the Christian belief, although not presenting an argument which can be pressed home on unwilling ears.

Then the chapters li. and lii. deal with the familiar subject of Israel's restoration, Jerusalem is to rise from the dust and escape from her captivity. The people who have "sold themselves for naught" are to be "redeemed without money." In this connection God's righteous servant is again introduced. "He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high." Many were astonished at Him. His visage and form having been marred, He shall startle many nations, kings shall shut their mouths at Him, for that which has not been told them shall they see, and that which they have not heard shall they consider.²

There is a world of meaning in these last words. Christ came to "fulfil the law and the prophets," but who will believe the report of such an astonishing work?

The Jews could not believe in a Messiah who fulfilled the

(1) Isaiah, xlix., 5-7. (2) See Revised Version.

law. The Gentiles as a whole do not expect Him to fulfil the prophets. Many Christian kings have never even heard of these matters, and they could receive no greater surprise than to witness the fulfilment of prophecies of which they have "not been told."

Then the prophet asks the question, "Who hath believed our report?" Put a little stress on the word "hath" to catch the full meaning of the question. Even the chosen people would not believe, but when He should first grow up as a tender plant and a root out of a dry ground, they would despise Him, and see no beauty that they should desire Him. He would be smitten, condemned and put to death, but not for His own offences, for He did no evil. Just as the prophet Daniel confessed his iniquity and the iniquity of his people which had brought God's curse upon them, so the prophet Isaiah makes confession, "All we like sheep have gone astray and have turned every man to his own way." Just as Daniel's prayer was answered by the assurance of the angel that Messiah was coming to put away sin and to make reconciliation for iniquity, so the prophet Isaiah continues, "and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "For the transgression of my people was He smitten." Just as the prophet Daniel declared that Messiah should be cut off, so Isaiah says that "His soul should be made an offering for sin, and He should be cut off out of the land of the living."

He would be raised from the dead, however, for the time of exaltation "He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand." He is to be prince of peace and father of the coming age. He will justify many, having borne their iniquities, and viewing the great company saved by His merit "He will see His seed." The words of the Old and New Testament combine so perfectly that we may well borrow from both. "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they who have come out of much tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple." "By His knowledge God's righteous servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." They shall say, "Thou art worthy, for thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

Who but the Christ was God's righteous servant to raise up the people of Israel and to be given as a light to the Gentiles? Who but Christ has been chosen by God yet despised by man and abhorred of the nation? Who but Christ to be exalted and very high, to astonish kings, to redeem His people, to be perfectly free from evil—the only one so described in all the Scriptures? Who but Christ to be offered as a sacrifice, to have the sins of the world laid upon Him, to be killed, to conquer death, to

prolong His days, to make the pleasure of Jehovah, to prosper, to justify many, and finally to view with satisfaction the living fruit of His painful labour?

We know of one good reason for repudiating this interpretation. To admit it is to admit that God spoke through the prophet. If then you cannot believe in inspiration, you are bound to find some other meaning for these words in a Jewish book. The prophet meant himself or his son, or the Jewish nation, or just nothing at all.

Well, choose the side on which you think the weight of evidence is, but do not be so narrow-minded and prejudiced that you can see no element of reason in the Christian stalwart's position, or any justification for his obstinate faith in Christ. Rather view the argument with judicial broad-mindedness, and taking careful note of its various features put it on the shelf of memory with the others.

CHAPTER XI.

PROPHECIES REGARDING VARIOUS NATIONS.

When reference is made to Old Testament prophecies regarding nations which have passed away, rejectors of all degrees are disposed to explain them by assigning a late date for the Scripture in question. They claim that the predictions were written after the events. In some instances the accuracy of detail has been openly cited as evidence that the prophecies were written centuries after the time claimed in the book itself.

This argument, if it can be so described, is based upon the assumption that the claims of ancient seers are false; that, in fact, there is no such thing as a capacity to foretell future events. It is really a case of begging the question, but it is interesting as a tacit recognition of the fact that the establishment of the authenticity of prophecy would be evidence of inspiration.

If we compare the eighth chapter and the first few verses of the eleventh chapter of the book of Daniel, we find prophecy partly in symbol and partly in plain language the meaning of which cannot be doubted. It was predicted that in the coalition of Medes and Persians the latter people should rise higher than the former, although they should be second in coming to the ascendant. There was to be a conflict between the Persians and the Greeks, resulting in the overthrow of the former and the establishment of a great empire by a mighty Grecian king. This conqueror passing away, his kingdom was to be divided into four, symbolised in chapter viii. by four horns and described in chapter xi. as being divided to the four winds but "not to his posterity."

All this was fulfilled exactly. The Persians came to the ascendant after the Medes, and they rose higher. They were overthrown by the Grecians under Alexander the Great. When Alexander passed off the scene, his dominions were divided into four parts, not to his posterity, but to four of his generals.

The application of this prediction cannot be disputed. The objector unhesitatingly affirms that the book was written after the division of the Grecian empire instead of during the Babylonian captivity. The accuracy of the prophecy is cited as evidence that it must have been written after the events.

Similarly there is a prophecy in the book of Ezekiel regarding Tyre.¹ The famous city of the Phœnicians was to be overthrown, the dust of it was to be scraped up so as to make it like the top of a rock. It was to be a place for fishermen to spread their nets, and it should never be built again.

Tyre was overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar. Then, when the city had been entirely removed to the island fortress, the work of demolition was completed by Alexander the Great when he built his famous bridge across the water. The demand for material was so great that the dust of the old city was literally scraped up, and the ancient site made like the top of a rock.

Again the sceptic has no hesitation in saying that the prophecy was written at a much later period than is supposed by believers, and that it claimed to predict the future when, as a matter of fact, the events had already passed into history.

We quite agree that it is difficult to demonstrate that these prophecies of the Old Testament were written at the date claimed for them, but we cannot agree that the sceptic's explanation of their apparent prescience is as simple and obvious as he appears to think. It is a very strained assumption to account for only a small part of the difficulty. The Bible contains prophecies quite as distinct as those just cited, which have been fulfilled as exactly in modern history. It is easy to show such instances of prophecies being fulfilled hundreds, and even thousands, of years after the last date that would be named by the most hostile of critics for the completion of the Bible.

For instance, the prophecies regarding Egypt cover the whole period from the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar down to the present time. The predictions were of a kind that might most easily have been falsified. They were utterly different from any of those Gentile prognostications that have sometimes been quoted by rejectors of Scripture.

It was declared by the prophet Ezekiel, in the twenty-ninth chapter of his book, that the king of Babylon should devastate the land of Egypt, and that the Egyptians should be scattered among the nations. To this point the prophecy somewhat resembles the predictions regarding Israel. Both people were to have their land invaded and were to be scattered among the nations. Here, however, the resemblance ends. The dispersion of the Jews was to continue for many generations. That of the Egyptians was to last for only forty years. After this period the Egyptians were to return from their captivity into their own land.

To this point the unbeliever would feel no difficulty. He would say unhesitatingly that the prophecy was written after the event. What shall we say of the words which immediately follow? "They shall be there a base kingdom. It shall be the basest of

(1) Ezekiel, xxvi.

the kingdoms, neither shall it any more exalt itself above the nations."

This is an illustration of the point mentioned in an earlier chapter. It differs completely from even the most famous of Gentile forecasts. It is not a prediction of a likely development without any time limit; it is not fenced round so that it could not be falsified. It is an emphatic assertion that a development which seemed very likely on natural grounds should never materialise. It is a challenge to eternity. Egypt, favoured by nature, rose early to a position of eminence. Why should it not do it again? "It shall be a base kingdom" and "shall no more exalt itself above the nations." "I will diminish them that they shall no more rule over the nations." This is the verdict of the prophet Ezekiel. Every century that has passed has been a menace to this forecast if it was a mere expression of Jewish opinion. At any period events might so easily have favoured a recrudescence of Egyptian power, completely falsifying the Jewish prophecy that the ancient land of the Pharaohs should never again be exalted over the nations. Surely, then, there is something rather significant in the fact that this prophecy has stood the test of over two thousand years.

This, however, is only a small part of the case. In the next chapter, Ezekiel xxx., the prophet goes on to declare that the land of Egypt should be wasted by strangers, and there should be no more a prince of the house of Egypt. This is another challenge to eternity with more of detail in its prophecy. To say that the kingdom should be base and never again exalt itself over the nations was bold enough, but to declare that it should be perpetually ruled by strangers, that there should never again be a native prince, is surely unique in its confident assumption of foreknowledge.

The prophecy is matched by a unique history in fulfilment. A reader who is interested in the matter will do well to read a brief history of Egypt, such as can be found in the "Encyclopædia Britannica." The record of two thousand years, considered in the light of the very definite prophecies quoted from Ezekiel, will at least make an intelligent student reflect seriously.

When the Medes and Persians came to the ascendant the Egyptians suffered from the rule of a "cruel lord,"¹ as was foretold by the prophet Isaiah. We read in the history how a long struggle was maintained until "at length the native energy was worn out." That when the Greeks took possession of the country as conquerors of Persia they were "welcomed as deliverers." From this time we are told "the native princes pass off the scene." For three centuries the Grecian rule was maintained by the Ptolemies. In B.C. 217 the aid of Rome was called in, still stronger strangers then coming to the ascendant. It

(1) Isaiah, xix., 4.

became the policy of Rome to keep Egypt weak. The government of the Ptolemies was not allowed to fall, neither was it permitted to be efficient. A strong prince was thwarted by Rome, but a weak prince was supported. "Egypt could not rid herself of a bad ruler or enjoy the full advantage of a good one." The "Encyclopædia Britannica" thus describes how Egypt was made and maintained as a base kingdom. The very word "debased" is used in this brief history.

In A.D. 639 Egypt was invaded by Muslims, and from this time until A.D. 868 the country was governed by a succession of viceroys appointed by the Caliphs of Damascus and Baghdad, who capriciously changed the rulers, regardless of the interests of the unfortunate country.

In the thirteenth century Egypt entered upon a still darker period with the rise of the Mamelukes. The accession of these people to power presents an anomaly unparalleled in history, and hardly surpassed even in the most extravagant farce. As the name implies, they were originally slaves. They were Circassians imported into the country as bond slaves, and by an extraordinary trick of fortune which can hardly be explained they became the rulers. For over two centuries they maintained their ascendancy, the basest of strangers thus ruling this country that once had been greatest among the nations.

Early in the sixteenth century the Turks came on the scene. In the year 1798 there was a brief interlude with fresh strangers, the French attempting to establish themselves in the land. The Turks, however, maintained their hold without any radical change in the situation until within the memory of many who are now living.

In the year 1882 there was a rising of the national party under Arabi Pasha, which, had it been successful, might have provided the sceptic with a better weapon against the Bible than any he has yet found with all his efforts.

The rising was well timed, for the power of Turkey was waning fast, and the Sublime Porte could not offer much assistance to the outlying parts of his dominions. The only effect of the rebellion, however, was to bring still stronger strangers on the scene. The British went into Egypt with the idea of preventing disorder, and in the early stages many promises were made regarding an early evacuation. Circumstances, however, have proved too strong. The British remain the real rulers of the country to this day.

This last phase of Egyptian history introduces a new chain of evidence perhaps more convincing than any that has yet been presented, but also too recondite to find a place in this chapter. It may be possible to give a hint of it later. For the moment the case shall rest on the main facts of this history of two

thousand years. We will not even trouble about the details of prophecy to be found in Isaiah xix.

It was certainly more than two thousand years ago that the prophet who reproved the "rebellious house" of Israel turned to assign for the Egyptians an entirely different destiny. They should return from a short captivity, they should constitute a base kingdom, it should exalt itself no more above the nations, the country should be ruled by strangers, and there should be no more a prince of the house of Egypt.

History shows how Egypt was debased through many different causes. The country has been ruled by Persians, Grecians, Romans, Saracens, slaves, Turks, and finally by the British. There has been no native prince for two thousand four hundred years. All has happened quite naturally, but how did the prophet foresee it? His own explanation is that the word of the LORD came to him, telling him to set his face "against Egypt and prophesy against it."¹

Surely, then, it is reasonable that we should make careful mental note of this evidence and put it away on our shelf, ready for the final review.

We may make a similar parcel of the other prophecies we have mentioned. The one regarding Tyre and the prediction of Daniel as to the conquests of Alexander the Great and the final division of his empire. It is true that the sceptic brushes these on one side with the confident assertion that they must have been written after the events they profess to foretell, and it is difficult to prove just when these books were produced. In view of the fact that some of the most explicit prophecies have been proved true through a searching test of more than two thousand years, is it sensible to explain less important but more ancient evidences of prescience by the strained and unreasonable suggestion that fraudulent predictions were written after the events they professed to foretell?

Perhaps some readers would ask what we mean by saying that this familiar suggestion of unbelief is strained and unreasonable. We will try to explain in the next chapter before presenting any other evidences of prophecy.

(1) Ezekiel, xxix., 1-2.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN WERE THE PROPHECIES WRITTEN?

It is undeniable that the prophets of Israel professed to forecast future events by the power of God's spirit. If, therefore, these were bogus prophecies written after the events they pretend to foretell, it is impossible to escape from the conclusion that they were deliberate frauds. For what conceivable purpose could such frauds have been perpetrated? There is only one answer that can even be suggested. It was with the object of supporting the special claims made and to convince the people that God had really inspired the prophet. Obviously the first appeal would be to contemporary readers. Authors do not engage in elaborate frauds merely to deceive a remote posterity. Surely it is equally obvious that the object of impressing the people would be achieved without the fraudulent prophecies far more readily than with them.

The justice of this observation is instantly apparent if we transfer the circumstances to our own time. If an author in these days claimed to write by direct inspiration from God, his only chance of gaining a following would be by avoiding any decisive test of his professions. If his command of language was in any way comparable to that of the old prophets, he might find some people who would believe in him so long as he relied on his exalted claims and the magic of his words. If, however, he tried to support his case by giving professed forecasts of events which had already occurred, he would immediately deliver himself to his opponents.

Of course the sceptic claims that there is no parallel between modern times and the days of ancient Israel. The usual suggestion is that in Palestine two thousand years ago the people were very ignorant and credulous. It is argued that these fraudulent predictions were thrust upon them by designing priests.

We are tempted to wonder whether people who make this suggestion have ever read the Bible at all. The prophecies fabricated by designing priests! Surely no other collection of writings can be found where the priestly order is so severely treated as in these books of the Old Testament. Prophets and priests were condemned with frightful vehemence. The evils

which had befallen the nation are directly ascribed to the wickedness of the great men. "The rulers of this people cause them to err" is a testimony frequently repeated and emphasised in the long-drawn indictment of the "rebellious house."

To find a parallel case in modern times we should have to suppose a succession of writers claiming to be inspired by God and offering to the nation greater insults than it has ever received from foreign enemies. Our imaginary writers tell the truth about party politics! They smite the rulers of the country with scandalous vehemence. They condemn the judges and lawyers, officials and teachers, declaring that they "take bribes" and "pervert all justice," so that the whole nation has become corrupt like a body "full of wounds and putrifying sores." They condemn society from top to bottom, likening the country to Sodom and Gomorrah or any other example of extreme abomination. Then, declaring that the religious teachers are mainly responsible for these evils, they call for the vengeance of Heaven on idle and greedy priests and parsons who "tell lies in the name of the Lord," who "prophesy for hire" and are too much hardened in sin to be able to blush "when they have committed abomination."

We are not suggesting that such a furious indictment would be just, but we certainly suggest that it would be very unpopular. If, therefore, the writers were so foolish as to attempt to support their claims to divine inspiration by bogus prophecies written after the events they professed to foretell, a complete and crushing exposure would inevitably follow. The men best able to expose the fraud would have the best personal reasons for desiring to do so. We cannot imagine anyone making the grotesque suggestion that designing priests and parsons were the actual authors and fabricators of prophecies so insulting to their order. Yet, in dealing with the Scriptures of ancient Israel from which we have taken these offensive words, just such an idea is confidently put forward. It is assumed that the whole problem of prophecies which were fulfilled previous to the beginning of the Christian era is disposed of by the simple answer that they must have been written after the events. We are quite sure that anyone who will take the trouble to become acquainted with the character of these writings will experience no difficulty in understanding what we mean by describing this familiar suggestion of scepticism as strained and unreasonable. It is an extraordinarily mild description of such a theory.

Then we have to consider the fact that many of the predictions deal with world-wide events which would certainly not offer the best ground for impressing an ignorant and rural people. Such readers would be more influenced by predictions regarding local matters which came immediately within their survey. The prophecies of the Bible often have to do with events the full meaning of which can only be seen by the student of history who

takes a broad view of events which have developed through many centuries. This has been shown in connection with the history of Egypt. It is still more evident in the prophecies of the book of Daniel.

The prophecies of Daniel have suffered severely from the efforts of reputed friends. The obvious meaning of his main prediction has been resisted by theologians because it clashed with their theories regarding the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, the more obscure passages of his book have been pressed into service in connection with any event of the moment. Applications have been made so fanciful and strained that one has sometimes been tempted to doubt the sincerity of the expositors. Beyond all doubt much harm has been done by giving the unbeliever reason to scoff at those who try to expound Bible prophecies.

The second chapter of the book of Daniel furnishes an excellent illustration of a great revelation given in a setting which seems simply like a story for children. We are told that King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which troubled him. The details of the dream had entirely escaped from his memory, and yet such a definite impression was made that he felt convinced that it had a real meaning which called for interpretation. He therefore sent for the wise men and commanded them to supply the defects of his memory. The magicians—undoubtedly wise men in their generation—asked that the king should tell his dream, when they would make known the interpretation. They would have been quite equal to the task of finding a flattering meaning for any dream. The king answered that he had forgotten the dream, but that it would come back to him as soon as they related it. He added shrewdly that if they could first describe the dream to him it would be the best evidence that they were capable of making a correct interpretation. The magicians were quite unable to meet this demand, and therefore the angry king, with the thorough-going methods of his age, decreed that all the wise men in the land should be slain.

To this point the narrative is quite on the lines of a story for children. We should smile on reading it for the first time, and even the children would know what was coming. Of course Daniel is a wise man. They will come to kill him, and then he will step forward and tell the king what it was that he dreamed. Then Daniel and his friends will be exalted, the magicians will have been saved by him, and all will end well.

It is easy to understand a reader who has not mastered all the details laughing at the idea of this being regarded as a divine revelation. We must repeat, however, that we have no data on which to reason when we try to determine what kind of book God would cause to be written in giving a revelation to man. The only logical test of its pretensions lies in the simple question,

does it reveal matters which are beyond the knowledge of mankind?

Try for a moment to banish every kind of prejudice, whether of scepticism or of theological theories, and let Daniel be his own interpreter. He definitely stated that the king had been cogitating as to what would come after him, and the dream was a revelation of the future from God, Who alone could know. The dream was of a great and terrible image, with head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet part of iron and part of clay. While the king regarded this vision a stone "cut from the mountain without hands" struck the image on its feet. Then all the metals were broken up, while the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The interpretation, given in perfectly plain language, was that the image represented the kingdoms of men. The head of gold stood for the Babylonian power. "After thee," said Daniel, "shall arise a kingdom inferior to thee," represented by the silver, "and a third kingdom of brass which shall bear rule over all the earth." The fourth kingdom, represented by the legs of the image, was to be strong as iron, breaking in pieces and bruising other kingdoms even as iron breaks other metals. After the passing of the fourth power mentioned the kingdom was to be divided, as symbolised by the feet and toes of the image, part of iron and part of clay. It was to be "partly strong and partly broken," "mingling with the seed of men but not cleaving together even as iron is not mixed with clay."

"In the days of these kings," Daniel concluded, "the God of Heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand for ever."

Many superior people might smile at this recital and suggest that we are trying to revise the old and exploded idea that history can be dealt with under the heading of four great empires. They would liken us to the "fifth monarchy men" of Cromwell's time, and contrive to suggest that only very ignorant people could see anything wonderful in Daniel's prophecy. It may freely be admitted that there has been ignorance of history among expositors of Daniel. Knowledge, after all, is only a matter of degree. We are all ignorant of many truths. It is to be feared, however, that among the superior people there has often been something worse than ignorance. There has been an effort to raise obscurity where unpleasant truths showed too clearly.

Who would dispute that there have been other kingdoms on earth beside the four mentioned by Daniel? In testing this prophecy, however, we only need to deal with the ground it covers. It makes no attempt to present a universal history. It

presents the kingdoms of men in relation to the kingdom of God or the final dispensation on earth, of which all the prophets speak, when the will of the Father will be done on earth even as it is now done in Heaven. How does the prediction fit in with history?

The first great power was the Babylonian. Everyone will admit that this was great and imperial, as it is represented. The second was the coalition of Medes and Persians. The attempt of some commentators to make out that only the Medes were intended is simply not honest. In the seventh chapter and again in the ninth chapter there is the clearest indication that the writer of the book of Daniel regarded the Medes and Persians as constituting one power, whether symbolised by the two arms of the image, or the beast raised up on one side, or the ram with two horns, of which the higher came up last. Beyond this, however, the matter is surely settled by Daniel's own history. When the Babylonian power passed away it was stated "thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

This admitted, it follows inevitably that the third kingdom referred to is that of the Grecians who, under Alexander the Great conquered the Persians. Equally certain is it that the fourth kingdom was that of the Romans, who next rose to the chief place. Who will deny that this was the strongest of the powers breaking in pieces all who resisted it and fittingly symbolised by iron? Some sceptics will claim that this was another instance of predictions written after the events. They will maintain that the writer of the book of Daniel saw the ascendancy of the terrible power of Rome, and thus in describing its iron-like strength was only wise after the event. There is a limit, however, to this violent process of ante-dating. Everyone will admit that the book of Daniel was completed and was part of the Jewish Scriptures before the beginning of the Christian era. Rome had risen to ascendancy before then, but she did not begin to decline until two centuries later. Then why make such strained and unreasonable efforts to assign a late origin for the prophecy merely to account for the less important of its prophecies? Incomparably the most striking part of the prediction is the latter half, which indicates a complete change in the order of events. One who, looking back on history, saw the uprising of four powers successively dominating the world in which they moved, would surely expect the process to continue. He would expect a fifth great power to follow the fourth.

Even on looking back from now it is not easy to see why this did not happen. The lust of conquest has remained with the monarchs all through the ages, and surely the facilities have not been decreased. As fighting became more artificial there was increased opportunity for a conqueror who happened to obtain control of a new weapon to crush all opponents and to hold them

in subjection. If the Greeks with their pikes and the Romans with their short swords could successively conquer the world, who could set a limit to the power of the nation which first used guns or other modern weapons?

The prophecy of Daniel was quite definite on this point. It offers, in fact, a challenge to eternity in the teeth of all that might have been expected on natural grounds. The terrible Roman power was to be divided, to be partly strong and partly broken, and this condition was to continue until the final dispensation, when the kingdom and dominion under the whole heaven should be given to the saints of the most High. There was to be no fifth kingdom of men. It is only when we see the matter in this light that the full significance of the prophecy can be realised.

Fourteen centuries have passed since the break up of the Roman empire. Repeated efforts have been made by successive rulers of flourishing countries to establish an empire on the Roman plan. Spain made the attempt; France has tried more than once. In our own days Germany has made a still more determined effort. Inventions which have revolutionised the science of war and have conquered the obstacle of distance have given to the great leader far more opportunity to outstrip all rivals and to crush them than was ever enjoyed by the conquerors of the past. Yet all the efforts to establish a fifth empire have failed. The kingdom has remained partly strong and partly broken. There has been in it of the strength of the iron, but "mingled with the seed of men"—a democratic element which has been a cause of weakness and an obstacle to imperial ambitions. The conditions were aptly symbolised by the feet and ten toes of the image part of iron and part of clay, or by the ten horns of the terrible fourth beast, representing ten kingdoms which should arise.

Perhaps some critics may raise the objection that the men of simple faith who believe in this prophecy exaggerate the difference between the conditions which prevailed in the days of Roman power and the days which have followed. They will claim that even in her palmyest days the empire of Rome was not so complete as simpletons have supposed, and that consequently the prolonged period of division and weakness which has followed is not so significant as they have represented.

We will admit this. It is almost invariably the case that an argument is exaggerated by those who honestly believe in it. That is no reason, however, for critics to swing to the other extreme and to deny the plainest of facts. If anyone is disposed to question whether a great change has taken place in the affairs of Europe since the fall of the Roman empire, we would ask them to read the words of Gibbon. He is renowned as a great authority on this subject, and as he did not believe in the Bible he certainly will not be suspected of colouring history for the benefit of Old Testament prophets. The following words are from

Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"—the end of chapter iii.—

"A modern tyrant who should find no resistance either in his own breast or in his people, would soon experience a gentle restraint from the example of his equals, the dread of present censure, the advice of his allies and the dread of his enemies. The object of his displeasure would easily obtain in a happier climate a secure refuge, a new fortune adequate to his merits, the freedom of complaint and perhaps the means of revenge. But the empire of the Romans filled the world, and when that empire fell into the hands of a single person the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. 'Wheresoever you are,' said Cicero to the exiled Marcellus, 'remember that you are equally within the power of the conqueror.' "

The fact is that whatever crudities and exaggerations there may be in the views of the devoted student of Daniel, their position has a solid foundation which has been most unfairly ignored by critics. If we compare the words of the prophet with the words of the accredited historian, and treat both with common fairness, we are bound to admit that Daniel's forecast has been fully justified during a period of prolonged test, with the precedents of ancient history all against it, and with successive military leaders attempting to realise ambitions which would falsify it.

There are other details arising, particularly out of the seventh chapter of the prophecy, which are probably regarded by some believers as the most convincing of all, but which involve reference to matters so objectionable that we would gladly avoid them. Our object, however, is to explain the obstinacy of those people who evoke the astonishment and sometimes the scorn of observers by the implicit faith they still repose in the Bible. It would not be fair or honest to ignore some of the arguments they regard as most powerful merely out of consideration for the feelings of their opponents.

We must present the rude convictions of the Christian stalwart, asking the reader to restrain all feeling of anger even if the argument involves an attack on institutions that are revered. It is always well to try to understand those from whom we differ. We may remain convinced that they are wrong and yet come to perceive why it is that they are so certain that they are right. It is foolish to be angry at the impotent attacks of opponents if we remain quite sure of our own ground. It is still more foolish to lose temper if we begin to doubt our own position and to suspect that the outrageous opinions of a despised minority may be right after all.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RUDE ARGUMENTS.

There are times when we make ourselves politely stupid in order to spare the feelings of friends. If a visitor has an unfortunate cast in the eye we carefully avoid any reference to such defects. If an unsophisticated little boy stares at the visitor and asks why some people's eyes do not both look the same way, we ignore the child if we can, and pretend we do not know what he means if it is impossible to ignore him. Some polite adults would find occasion to administer a severe corrective to teach to youth the blessing of reticence.

There is a similar tendency even in connection with matters of religion. Educated people often make themselves politely stupid to spare the feelings of friends. If rude Christians point out ugly facts, the first effort is to ignore them. If this is impossible, misunderstand them; and if opportunity offers, punish them. Religious persecution has generally been the expression of utter spiritual nakedness, and scornful and sarcastic speech has often been the final confession of polemical bankruptcy.

There is a wonderful power in the kindly and patient exhibition of truth by a well educated man or woman. If, therefore, in dealing with people of unmistakable sincerity, educated men employ violent language of scorn and contempt, it is fair to draw the inference that there are no real arguments to use. Often the case is analogous to that of the little boy who gives offence by pointing out uncomfortable truths. The simple Bible believer calls attention to prophecies regarding the uprise of a corrupt system of religion. He points to the details of ecclesiastical history as affording the most extraordinary confirmation of these Scriptural forecasts. His case is such that whether he is right or wrong any intelligent observer who takes the trouble to master the argument can at least understand why it has produced such conviction. The whole subject is so unpleasant, however, that polite Christians naturally desire to send the rude man out of the room.

Perhaps it will be denied that such considerations could weigh with men in connection with a subject of such importance. A little purposeful resistance to truth may be legitimate in the

amenities of polite society, but who would dare to encourage it in connection with matters of life and death, where in any case truth must prevail?

We would answer that in reason and logic all must agree that there is no excuse for allowing vital decisions to be affected by convention of manners; but where, in all the world, is your completely logical human being? Even in commercial matters, which touch men's interests in the closest possible manner, and in connection with which realities are pressed home with merciless insistence every day, men still give rein to feeling and prejudice, and continually they are resisting unpleasant but obvious truths. Experts in business matters agree that one of the greatest difficulties they experience is in persuading their clients to face ugly facts. The truth will inevitably prevail, and it may drag down to ruin the men who refused to see it. If they would recognise the ugly truth in time and make the necessary reform in their business, success would follow. The facts of the case are palpable, and yet continually they are ignored. All the weight that reason can bring to bear fails to overcome the natural reluctance to accept a rude and unpleasant truth which involves an immediate interference with the placidity or the paucity of thought. If this is so in connection with matters of business, where truth is near and insistent, how much more in the more abstruse problems of religion?

There is some excuse for the unfair way in which modern observers have treated sincere and thorough-going protestants. There has been much bitterness in the religious controversy of the past. Persecution has provoked persecution. There has been hatred on both sides, with the result that judgment of Scriptural matters has often been warped. It is perhaps natural, therefore, for an observer who is not particularly interested, to assume that every offensive application of Bible prophecy is merely an expression of unreasoning antipathy. We desire to do justice in the matter and show that the extreme protestant, whether he is right or wrong in his conclusions, has some solid ground for his convictions. Sometimes he holds them solely at the call of reason with personal inclination, family ties and self-interest all pulling in the other direction.

Take, for instance, the most extreme case of all—the terrible imagery of Revelation xvii. There we have the figure of a harlot drunk with the blood of saints yet arrayed with such splendour as to command the admiration of beholders. The extreme protestant regards it as a prophecy of the uprising of the Roman Catholic power, and as such an unmistakable evidence of divine fore-knowledge displayed in the Bible. Some impartial but little interested observers have regarded this interpretation as a mere exhibition of spleen and bitter feeling, as unreasonable as it is unkind. They would seek no better cause for such a conviction

than the well-known hatred which has divided and disgraced the sects of Christendom, and which may lead narrow-minded men to apply any harsh and insulting description to their opponents.

If there had been no explanation of that awful imagery of the book of Revelation this criticism might be just. The meaning of the symbol is explained, however, in plain language. We are informed quite definitely that these signs were given to show to the servants of God things that should come to pass. In connection with the particular symbol under review, the Apostle John states that the details were explained to him by the angel. The seven heads of the beast on which the woman sat represented seven mountains. The ten horns represented ten kings which had not at that time received their kingdoms. The woman was "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

Surely it is foolish for anyone to pretend that there is any difficulty in identifying this city. Everyone must know that Rome has the peculiarity of being built on seven hills. You can find them named in any cyclopædia—Capitolina, Palatine, Aventine, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, and Cælian.

Everyone knows that Rome was the only city which could be described as reigning over the kings of the earth at the time, or anywhere near the time when the book of Revelation was written. The words of the angel tell us twice over that Rome is the great city symbolised by the woman, and it is only a very purposeful obtuseness which fails to understand. If we speak of a mysterious and wicked city which is on the river Thames and is the largest city in England, we shall not expect listeners to find any mystery in identifying the place so described. Even if one were convinced that London contained no wickedness of any kind, we should think he would nevertheless recognise that London was referred to. Why should the lover of Rome pretend that he cannot understand the equally explicit description of a city built on seven hills, and the city which reigned over the kings of the earth in the days when Christianity was first planted in the world?

When reasonable men can be induced to face this matter they fully recognise that Rome was meant, but sometimes they say it was pagan Rome, not papal Rome. To this the real protestant has a ready answer. He points out that the ten horns represent ten kings which had not received a kingdom when the Revelation was given, and the woman is shown among them. It is clear, then, that she did not represent a persecuting power, existing before the break up of the Roman empire, but something that was to come later, among "things which should be hereafter."

There is another argument the protestant can use, an argument much stronger than the consideration of historical developments, and as it seems to many earnest students

absolutely conclusive. The symbol of harlotry is used repeatedly in Scripture, and always with the same meaning.

We have known critics to take violent objection to the grossness of the symbol. No one, however, will be so foolish as to argue that if God condescended to give a revelation to mankind He would necessarily show any regard for the susceptibility of human prudes. It is more reasonable to suppose that the One to whom all things are naked and open would strip us of our pretences, and that if He desired to depict something which on the spiritual plane is offensive to Him He would employ a symbol which on the material plane is offensive to us.

In any case it cannot be denied that in the Bible this symbol of whoredom is used repeatedly, and always with the same meaning. Spiritual fornication is a departure from God on the part of those who profess or have professed to serve Him. The symbol is not applied to heathen nations whose practices are so strongly condemned. They had never served God, so they could not depart from Him. They were vile, but they were not unfaithful.

When, however, Israel followed heathen gods, the offensive word was applied to them again and again. "I have been a husband to you," God is represented as saying, and Israel had departed from Him like an unfaithful wife.

The same idea of God's relation to His people is taken up in the New Testament. "I have betrothed you to one husband," says the Apostle Paul, "that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

In addition to this we must note the fact that the New Testament declares in perfectly plain language that there would be an apostasy. It is an unpleasant and distressing thought, but surely it is only reasonable for earnest Christians to face the facts, and if religious people in these days think that Christ and His immediate disciples were narrow-minded or mistaken men, it would be honest to say so openly.

In the Sermon on the Mount we have Christ saying that the way to life was a narrow one which only few people would find, while the way to destruction was broad and "many should go in thereat."¹ We have the Apostle Paul stating that the "day of the Lord" for which they looked should not come until there had first been a "falling away" and the manifestation of a sinful power.² The same Apostle declared "the mystery of iniquity doth already work and it will increase unto more ungodliness." In writing to Timothy he predicted that a time would come when men "would not endure sound doctrine," but that they would regard teachers of their own choice and "turn away from the truth unto fables."³

(1) Matt., vii., 13, 14.

(2) II. Thess., ii., 3-8.

(3) II. Tim. iv., 3, 4.

It is idle to pretend that there is any ambiguity in this language. A falling away from the primitive faith is foretold in language as plain as can be devised. Therefore, when the well-known symbols are used again in the book of Revelation they should be intelligible. The book refers to the bride of Christ, who is to be prepared and clothed in white garments ready for the marriage, and it also predicts that there should be a harlot among the ten powers which should arise in the earth. An apostate unfaithful system of Christianity closely identified with the city of the seven hills which reigned over the kings of the earth in the day when the revelation was given.

Perhaps the significance of the symbol may become more apparent to the average reader if comparison is made between the seventeenth chapter of Revelation and the fiftieth chapter of Jeremiah. The earlier prophecy denounced the real Babylon, which had been such an enemy to Israel, and predicted its overthrow. Very similar language is used to that of the Revelation. Even the symbol of the golden cup and the maddening wine is employed, but there is no reference to whoredom. The reason lies on the surface. Ancient Babylon was evil, and her doctrines were like wine to make the nations mad, but the Babylonians had never been the people of God. They did not profess to serve the God of Israel, and therefore they could not be called unfaithful in all their idolatry. The mystical Babylon of the Apocalypse, however, is repeatedly denounced as a harlot; beautiful and bejewelled but unfaithful to the God she professes to worship.

To the thorough-going and sincere protestant the identification with papal Rome seems as complete as a mathematical demonstration. It seems equally clear to him that the prophecy has been wonderfully fulfilled in the history of Europe.

"Call no man on earth your father," said the Lord Jesus, "One is your Father in Heaven. Call no man your master, for One is your Master even Christ, and all ye are brethren." This is in accordance with the entire spirit of primitive Christianity. Is it the spirit of the papacy with a man at the head called the "Holy Father"?

"Be kind and gentle to all men."

"Be ready to render a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

That is the spirit of primitive Christianity. Is it the spirit of Rome? Think of the Spanish Inquisition; the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the fires of Smithfield, nearer home, and you will realise how this prophecy appears to those who, by their study of the Scriptures, have been led to the conviction that the real saints were among those persecuted minorities.

Every man who is willing to take an impartial view ought to be able at least to understand the position of the simple believer in the Bible and his convictions that the Roman Catholic religion

with its exaltation of a priestly caste and its Babylonian doctrines has made a great departure from the simple gospel of the Galilean fishermen. The vast majority of independent and impartial sceptics will recognise this fact. What then will they say to this rude and intensely unpopular prophecy? Can they suggest any possible meaning of the harlot except an unfaithful church? Can they suggest any possible meaning for the city built on seven hills and reigning over the kings of the earth except that it meant Rome? Can they deny that the Papacy has persecuted those who dissented from it—Waldenses and Huguenots and English reformers? We suggest that a candid and truthful answer should be given to these questions, and then that the argument, whatever value we attach to it, should be placed on the shelf of memory with the others.

If any readers should be sincere admirers of the Roman Catholic religion, we apologise for mentioning these matters, but still urge that the ugly facts should be faced. There are times when it is wise for a man to admit that appearances are against him. Such candour induces even those who believe in his guilt to hear his defence. The same rule applies when appearances are against a system. A purposeful obtuseness or a scornful repudiation of obvious inferences will never serve any good purpose. If a man thinks that he has any reasonable defence to make, either for himself or his faith, it is well to state it rather than to expend an equal amount of energy in fruitless manifestations of anger.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

We desire now for a few minutes to return to the book of Daniel in order to explain the convictions of the extreme protestant with regard to the rude details of this prophecy.

In chapter vii. we have the vision of the four beasts, harmonising with the vision of chapter ii. but adding further details. There cannot be any doubt that the fourth beast, stronger and more terrible than any of the others, represented the Roman empire. The break up of the Roman empire was symbolised in the second chapter of the prophecy by the ten toes of the image, part of iron and part of clay, partly strong and partly broken. In chapter vii. the uprise of ten kingdoms is signified by ten horns. The objector naturally resists the application of this prophecy at every stage. Sometimes he is rather scornful regarding the ten kingdoms because believers in the prophecy have not always agreed as to their identity. We think this is a very natural difficulty. Modern statesmen may agree that political boundaries should be drawn according to nationality and yet be quite unable to agree as to how many nations there are in Europe to be so divided. The rise and fall of kingdoms is determined by a multitude of causes acting and reacting on each other with infinite complexity. The believer in Daniel does not maintain that hosts of angels manipulated the history of Europe in order to sustain an exact correspondence with the symbolism of the prophecy. He merely believes that the power which inspired the prophet was able to foretell the main consequences of all the efforts and intrigues of humanity and the million causes of change which have moulded Europe's history.

It is difficult sometimes for expositors to agree as to whether a certain power is strong enough to be accounted a kingdom, or as to whether another is properly within the limits of the old Roman empire. In the main, however, it cannot be denied that the prophetic symbol has been wonderfully justified. In spite of the fact that warfare has become more scientific and that opportunities have increased for a conqueror to subjugate the nations, the old Roman empire has been divided and has so remained. There have been ten kingdoms, sometimes more than ten, but never many

more. It would certainly be impossible to fix on a number which would be truer to history.

What, then, of the other details in connection with these kingdoms which should arise? Everyone who is even slightly acquainted with this subject knows the significance attached by thorough-going protestants to the prophecy of the little horn. He regards it as a wonderful forecast of the uprising of the Papacy. What justification is there for this offensive application? We have no desire to labour the matter or even to argue it. We only wish to point out the facts which have led the extreme protestant to this conclusion.

The prophet declared that in the vision he saw a little horn rise among the ten. That it was diverse from the others, that it plucked up three horns by the roots, that it had a mouth speaking blasphemies against God, that it was full of eyes, that it persecuted the saints and that it was permitted to continue for a time, times and the dividing of time.

When the angel explained the vision he interpreted the symbols in the only sense possible, emphasising the fact that the vision was a revelation of future events. Ten kings were to arise out of the Roman empire. Another diverse power was to come up after them. He was to subdue three of them. He was to manifest the characteristics of the little horn seen in the vision, and to continue for the length of time indicated.

We will take the points one by one and try to show the protestant's point of view.

Everyone knows that the papacy arose to power after the break up of the Roman empire. Everyone will admit that it became a real power, with strength material no less than spiritual. Everyone will admit that it was diverse from the others. The first point of disagreement will be as to the subduing of three powers. This is an old controversy which has been fought out in high places, and there has been ample cause on both sides of the dispute for that unconscious form of prejudice in the reading of history which has often obscured some facts and over-emphasised or distorted others. The enthusiastic expositor of prophecy may easily be led into error without any conscious dishonesty. He will attach too much importance to those features of history which seem best to illustrate his ideas, and in the end he may distort them. If controversy is provoked, such as there has been between Papist and Protestant, the inevitable effect will be that the reaction will tend to minimise or obscure the features of history which have been over-accentuated. The historian who recognises no creeds, but who claims to deal merely with facts, will nevertheless be insensibly influenced by these controversies. In his effort to be impartial he will avoid any special emphasis of events which have been used by extremists in their attacks upon venerable institutions. This may have the effect of obscuring

facts and leading to distortions as serious as those produced by the most zealous and ignorant of Bible students.

The extreme protestant declares that three kingdoms were subdued by the papacy, and that was the origin of the triple crown worn by the Pope. The devout Catholic would repudiate such an idea altogether, and would maintain that the three crowns symbolise lordship over Heaven, earth and hell. The impartial historian would be far less definite. He might maintain that the papacy had been responsible for the downfall or subjugation of more than three kingdoms; while he would remain very sceptical as to the earth, heaven and hell theory as to the origin of the triple crown. He would probably maintain that the matter was one of the obscurities of history.

With all this uncertainty, however, there is no doubt as to the fact that the Pope alone among the rulers of earth has worn a triple crown, nor can it be disputed that kingdoms have been subdued by the papacy, whether the protestant expositor of Daniel is quite accurate in his view of history or not.

Then the little horn was described as full of eyes. It can hardly be disputed that this is an appropriate description of the Papacy, with its unequalled facilities for espionage in matters temporal, and its claim to a spiritual insight far transcending all others. It should be easy to understand how this argument appeals to those who use it, even if you cannot in any way yield to their convictions.

Then the little horn was represented as persecuting the saints. There may be divergence of opinion as to whether the extreme Protestants have been saints, but there can be no doubt that they have been persecuted by the papacy. No historian would attempt to deny this. The impartial chronicler of history would balance matters by stating that Protestants have been persecutors in turn, so that there has not been much to choose between them. We think, however, in point of fact the devoted students of the Bible have never been in a position of power to enable them to persecute anybody, and they have suffered both at the hands of Catholics and Protestants.

We are told that the little horn power would have a mouth speaking great things, even blasphemies against the Most High. Here again the argument may be stated very simply. Everyone will admit that the papacy has had a mouth speaking great things. As to whether the utterances have been blasphemous depends entirely on their truth. A simple-minded elder of an obscure Christian brotherhood may be quite wrong in his belief; but there is rarely anything that could be described as blasphemous in his statements, however mistaken they may be. The church of Rome, however, makes such claims that no compromise is possible. Either the papacy is all that it claims to be, or it certainly has a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies against God.

Finally there is the cryptic prophecy that it should retain its power against the saints for a time, time and the dividing of time.

There has been an extraordinary unanimity of opinion as to the correct reading of this cryptogram wherever any attempt has been made to understand it. Indeed, in all these matters the despised extremist of the present day does little more than repeat the expositions which were given by the most learned of the Protestant church in a ruder and honester age.

A Jewish time was three hundred and sixty days. Times would be seven hundred and twenty days, while the dividing of time—or, in other words, half a time—means one hundred and eighty days. The total is twelve hundred and sixty days, and meant, according to the established prophetic principle, a total period of twelve hundred and sixty years.

We have before us a little work by Robert, Lord Bishop of Clogher, "An impartial inquiry into the time of the coming of the Messiah," published in the year 1751. The bishop regarded the identity of the little horn with the papacy as established beyond all dispute, and the duration of the ascendancy as clearly twelve hundred and sixty years. He expected the final end of the papacy to be about the year 2015. Learned protestants of later days may be more polite or less honest, or broad-minded or less faithful (just as you care to view the matter), but we have never known a modern bishop of the Anglican Church to expound this prophecy with a view to showing that former bishops were mistaken in applying it to papal Rome.

It is obvious, however, that the uprising of the papacy was a work of time, and the fall may be gradual also. Have the extremists any sort of justification for applying this period of twelve hundred and sixty years and claiming that events have justified the prophecy? Unbelievers may scoff, but we think it would be foolish to deny that there are very strong grounds for the rude contention. We cannot imagine any well-informed man disputing that the papacy suffered very severely from the time of the French Revolution, and for eighty years onward to the fall of the temporal power. Neither can we imagine any reputable historian denying that the Church of Rome rose rapidly from the time of the emperor Justinian, and for seventy or eighty years onward to the recognition of the headship of the bishop of Rome. These two periods are separated from each other by 1,260 years.

It may be argued that the power of the bishop of Rome began to assert itself even before the beginning of the sixth century, and that it continued to increase until the beginning of the eighth century. In the same way it might be argued that the first signs of waning came before the French Revolution, while the final end has not come yet. The fact remains that the papacy gained power

to make war against those who opposed its claims, and retained its position for over twelve centuries.

There is good reason, however, to give the period a much more definite application than this. The prophecy speaks quite definitely regarding the power of the little horn to make war, and the twelve hundred and sixty years is stated to be the period in which the saints should be given into his hand. Surely it is reasonable to suppose that the power to make war began when the bishop of Rome was first proclaimed the head of all the churches by the decree of Phocas in A.D. 606, and the end of the power to make war came with the abolition of the temporal power in 1866-70, twelve hundred and sixty years later.

This application is naturally resisted by all lovers of the church of Rome and all rejectors of Scripture. It is one of those cases in which there is abundant reason on both sides for prejudice and for that unconscious perversion of fact to which we have referred earlier in this chapter. It has been urged by some that Phocas was a monarch of little authority, and that his decree was of no great importance. It has been pointed out that modern historical writers have little to say regarding Phocas or the recognition of pontifical supremacy accorded to the bishop of Rome in his reign.

It is quite true that you will need to search for any reference to the decree of Phocas if you look up the matter in an encyclopædia, and you will probably find that the later the edition of the work of reference the more meagre will be its details: What is the explanation? Has it been a case of over-accentuation on the one hand or of minimising and concealing on the other; or has there been an element of both?

The writer confesses that when he first gave attention to this matter he was under the impression that enthusiasts in the study of prophecy had allowed their judgment to be warped by their anxiety to find a definite application of the famous time period. It was impossible, however, to accuse them of prejudice and perversion of the fact in their conviction as to when it began. They had fixed upon the year 606 or 606-608 as the beginning of the power to make war long before the period of twelve hundred and sixty years came to an end. To the writer's knowledge, the decree of Phocas was confidently put forward as the time from which the period should date, in a general exposition of prophecy published in 1848. Probably this interpretation was a reflection of others written still earlier. Clearly this was no case of attempting to find in ancient history something to harmonise with the protestant's exposition of current events. In the year 1848, who could foresee what the events of 1866 would be? If there has been any perversion of history by the expositors of this prophecy, it must have been in their view of the ending of the time period. Did anything happen in the year 1866 to justify

them in saying "this ends the power of the Pope to persecute the saints"?

Strangely enough the secular historian supports them in their views as to the end of the period far better than in the beginning.

Take the Encyclopædia Britannica as an authority. We may be confident that if the writers of this work were under the sway of any form of prejudice it would be a very definite tendency to avoid anything which could support these ideas that we are expounding.

In the eleventh edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol. IV., page 266, we are told that "Boniface was Pope from the 15th of February to November 12th, 606. He obtained from Phocas recognition of the headship of the church of Rome."

Now turn to the article under the heading Pius IX., and you will find a much more detailed description of the events of twelve hundred and sixty years later.

We are told that "from the reduction of Ancona to the year 1870 Pius was maintained in Rome only by a French garrison."

We are told that when Victor Emmanuel felt himself to be strong enough he put in a formal claim for Rome; that it was agreed by the convention of 1864 that the French troops should be withdrawn, and the actual evacuation was effected in December, 1866.

The historian adds that this engagement was virtually violated by the entry in the following year of other troops, and "for some time longer the French soldiery continued to ward off both the daring assaults of Garibaldi and the more insidious approaches of Ratazzi."

When the war of 1870 broke out, however, this last legion was withdrawn. The end is described in the Encyclopædia Britannica.

"The Zouaves, some nine thousand in number, after receiving as they stood massed in the square of St. Peter the pontifical blessing, marched out of Rome, and the *temporal* power of the Pope had ceased to exist."

These words are definite enough to satisfy the most extreme of protestants. What better authority can we have than a standard encyclopædia, designed for the use of all classes of the public, written to inform, by the men best qualified to instruct us, and certainly with no bias in favour of those unpopular applications of prophecy. What more definite words than these—"the temporal power of the Pope ceased to exist"? What is the explanation of this most significant termination of the temporal power? Was it merely a chance? One more coincidence in the long list which we have to accept if we reject the Bible?

We do not imagine that one who repudiates this prophecy would take comfort in that extension of four years from 1866 to 1870, during which the pope was in a measure supported by

France. The effort has been rather to dispute the reasonableness of dating the twelve hundred and sixty years from the decree of Phocas. It is too late, however, for such a challenge. As we have already pointed out, the decree of Phocas was fixed upon as the true beginning at least as early as the year 1848. It was confidently anticipated by students of Daniel that 1866 *and the few years immediately following* would mark the end of the temporal power. Recognising, as we must, the inveterate tendency of humanity to allow the judgment of events to be warped by prejudice, it is well to take special note of this contrast. Previous to the events of 1866 the extreme believers in the prophecy of Daniel had no reason whatever for over-emphasising the importance of the decree of Phocas. Since the events of 1866 all who repudiate the prophecy have had ample reason for minimising it. Yet it was at least twenty years before the fall of the temporal power that believers fixed upon the decree of Phocas as the true beginning of the power to make war. We are confident that since the fall of the temporal power the compilers of encyclopædias and other chroniclers of history have been led to effect a measure of concealment in their effort to avoid giving support to ideas which are accounted outrageous.

It will be obvious, however, that to the simple soul who follows a belief in the Bible to its logical conclusion the prophecy of Daniel seems very wonderful. It was predicted that the Babylonian power would give place to a coalition of two powers, of which the second, to take the supreme position, would rise to a greater eminence than the first. This was fulfilled by the Medes and Persians, a Mede first reigning, but the coalition rising to greater power when later the Persian monarchs took the throne. It was predicted that the Persians would be overthrown by the Grecians under a great king, and that on the passing of this king his dominions would be divided into four, but "not to his posterity." This was fulfilled in the conquests of Alexander the Great and the subsequent division of his empire among his four generals. It was predicted that after the Grecian empire another power should arise, more terrible and stronger than any of the others which preceded it, a veritable kingdom of iron. This was fulfilled with the uprising of the Roman empire. It was predicted that after this there should not be another such empire of men; that the Roman kingdom would be divided into a number, retaining some elements of imperial strength, but also with elements of weakness and the rule of "the seed of men." This has been fulfilled during fourteen centuries in which successive conquerors have vainly striven to establish empires on the Roman plan. It was predicted that among the several kingdoms of divided Rome a new power should arise diverse from all the others. A power which should win three crowns, which should have great powers of seeing, a mouth speaking blasphemies and a

disposition to persecute the saints of God. And that this power to make war on those who dissented from it would continue for twelve hundred and sixty years.

Perhaps we are too near the facts for anyone to speak with complete impartiality as to whether these last predictions have been fully realised. When violent passions are aroused there is hardly a limit to the human capacity for over-accentuating or for resisting evidence. We are confident, however, that any reader with the slightest capacity for impartial investigation will at least be able to understand how the argument appeals to the extreme protestants, whose point of view we have tried to explain. For the moment that is all we desire. Make a neat mental parcel of the prophecies, and we will give them due weight in the final review.

THE LAST MESSAGE.

The devoted student of the Bible is sometimes rather suspicious of those who complain that the book of Revelation is too obscure for anyone to understand it. He cannot resist the conviction that the real difficulty is not that the last message of the Bible is painfully obscure, but that in its main features it is painfully plain. He does not marvel at the efforts at one time made to expurgate it from the canon of Scripture. He regards the preservation of the book as one of the greatest miracles of history, indicating that Providence has sometimes overruled in the councils of men.

We have heard it said that there are three schools of thought in the interpretation of this prophecy. First, that it is progressive, forecasting the development of history from the time the Revelation was given to the end of the kingdom of men. Second, that it all relates to the past in connection either with the destruction of Jerusalem or the overthrow of paganism. Third, that it is still all future.

In the same way it might be affirmed that there are three schools of thought in astronomical science. First, the idea that the earth is a sphere, revolving around the sun. Second, that it is a plane with sun, moon and stars revolving around it; and third, that it is a mountain of uncertain shape mounted on the back of a gigantic elephant. There are many earnest students of Scripture who would regard this as a fair analogy. The man who quotes the alternative theories of exposition as an excuse for not attempting to understand the Apocalypse, seems to them as unreasonable and puerile as the repudiator of astronomical postulates seems to the scientist.

In all such matters there will always be men who scorn to follow the beaten track made by the patient labours of those who have preceded them. They desire to elaborate a theory entirely their own.

We remember that a few years ago a self-appointed scientist put forth the theory that instead of living on the outside of a sphere we were living on the inside. That instead of the horizon curving down it curved up and finally encircled us, while all the heavenly bodies were situated somewhere inside the ball. Everyone with a head for geometry will realise how profoundly this theory would affect the calculation of distances. The sponsor of the theory invented an instrument to test the curvature of the earth, and this achieved the object for which it was designed, loyally supporting the views of its creator. Since then we have

heard no more of the matter, and we do not suppose that real scientists ever give it a passing thought.

The only genuine plan, either in science or in the exposition of prophecy, is for the student to learn all he can from those who have preceded him, to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good." He must test the conclusions of his mentors and only reject them after a humble and careful examination. Finally, he must be satisfied with his legitimately won honours if, as the result of a life's work, he only succeeds in adding a single ray of new light to the subject of his study. To the genuine student of prophecy it seems as certain that there has been a legitimate succession of thinkers and workers in the interpretation of the deep things of Scripture, just as in the exposition of Nature's secrets. In each case the genuineness of the study is unaffected by the fact that there have been charlatans and egotists who, by their folly, have provided some excuse for the indolent and the uninterested to scoff at the whole subject.

It is interesting to note in this connection that one man at least secured a place in both these lines of study. Sir Isaac Newton is recognised as one of the greatest of scientists. He is also admitted to a place in the long line of genuine Bible students, although most modern believers would probably place him on a lower level than such a man as Joseph Mede. Is it not possible, however, that if Sir Isaac Newton had devoted his entire energy to the study of prophecy he would have been the greatest exponent of all? In such a case he would doubtless have remained unhonoured by the world, the flesh and the devil. He would not even have found a place in the biographical pages of encyclopædias, and friends of the world would not have admitted that he was a man of exceptional mentality if they had ever been induced to cast a scornful eye at his work. As it was, Sir Isaac Newton only devoted a small part of his energies to the study of prophecy, and he only saw far enough to suggest the great work he might have accomplished if he had devoted his life to the subject.

There has been quite as much agreement among the genuine students of the book of Revelation as among the genuine students of Nature. Among them certain propositions are recognised as first postulates, certain lines of exposition have been so well established that they are no longer matters of dispute. They constitute a foundation on which successive expositors can build.

It is agreed by all such students that in the book of Revelation the future was revealed to the Apostle John by means of signs and symbols. It is agreed that the seals, the trumpets and the vials span the entire period from the time of the vision to the end of the kingdom of men.

It is agreed that the millennium or thousand years' reign of Christ on earth, instead of being a doctrine peculiar to the book

of Revelation, as some theologians have represented, is simply a more detailed explanation of the kingdom of God foretold by Daniel and all the prophets, and preached by Christ and His disciples as the very basis of their glad tidings.

This last point is perhaps the most important of all. Wherever there has been an understanding of the reality of the kingdom of God promised by the prophets of both Old and New Testament, there has been a growing appreciation of the book of Revelation and an understanding of its message. To the simple follower of the early disciples of Christ it seems certain that the general indifference to the book of Revelation in the religious world to-day is almost wholly due to the fact that the doctrine of the personal reign of Christ has been so largely discarded. And conversely the original repudiation of this doctrine was due to a failure to understand the book of Revelation, a failure which may have been excusable in those early days, but which is absolutely unpardonable now.

Every student knows that a belief in the reality of the Kingdom of God to be established on earth was universal among the early disciples of Christ. Gradually it came to be discarded. The "spiritualising" method of interpreting prophecy grew in favour. Some of the most talented of theologians put forth the theory that the Church was the Kingdom, and that through the Church Christ had begun his reign on earth.

What was the real reason of this change? It seems to us that there is a tremendously strong argument in support of the view that it was the natural outcome of a great triumph and a crushing disappointment. During the first three centuries of the Christian era there was already a marked falling away from the "simplicity that was in Christ." Some of the ecclesiastical leaders put forth claims and manifested qualities far removed from the days when even the great Apostle to the Gentiles was only "our beloved brother Paul." In the third century came the terrible persecution under Diocletian. For a time proud prelates and humble disciples of Christ alike suffered tribulation. Then, not long after, what a mighty change, with the greatest political earthquake history has yet recorded! Constantine embraced Christianity, and convinced all but the most thorough of Christ's followers that the time had come for them to take the sword. He led them with rare military genius, and the dragon of paganism was overthrown. It was natural that such a triumph, following a period of subjection and persecution, should produce the belief that the kingdom of God had come at last. In the first blush of success the deliverance from ignominy and constant danger would seem like the restoration of Paradise, with Christ very near if not actually visible. Doubtless the Christians had many ignoble associates, faithless and grasping. Possibly there were some at the opposite extreme who, through constant study

of the Scriptures, knew that the rejoicing of their fellows was only the mistaken triumph predicted in Rev. xii., and that the worse judgments were yet to come. It is certain, however, that there were very many who honestly believed that the promised kingdom had been established and that before long all its blessings would be manifest.

The crushing disappointment soon followed. There were quarrels between the immediate successors of Constantine. There was an attempt to restore paganism. Before many years had passed away, barbarians swept down from the North, putting an end to the Christian hope of peaceful dominion. Goths, Vandals and Huns successively invaded the western third of the Roman empire. Christians were slain, women were violated; churches were broken down. There was such wanton destruction of all that the civilised world venerated that two of these barbarous races have furnished us with words of reproach that are in common use to-day. A savage destruction of works of art we describe as vandalism. We have applied the name Hun to stigmatise a barbarism too bad for any ordinary word.

It was after this disappointment, this dashing of Christian hopes, that the doctrine of a merely spiritual kingdom gained ground. Is it not reasonable to conclude that this was merely an illustration of cause and effect?

To the student who follows the great exponents of the book of Revelation, the error of those who followed Constantine is glaringly apparent. The great change from paganism to a nominal form of Christianity was the great earthquake of the sixth seal. The jubilation of Christians exalted to the political heavens was predicted. After this were to follow the terrible woes of the seven trumpets, and the seven last vials of the wrath of God.

When the student accepts this starting point, he can trace the book of Revelation in history stage by stage. It has not only thrown a wonderful light on past events. It has enabled some of the great exponents to foretell the future in such a manner and with such consecutive order as to forbid the thought that it is mere coincidence.

We emphasise this last point very strongly. When we fit the symbols of the prophecy to the events of the past, critics may accuse us of moulding a doubtful form of language to suit the accomplished fact. When we are able to show that the same interpretation was made by former students centuries before the events, even those who are least inclined to believe are bound to recognise that they are presented with a direct and arresting challenge.

If any reader desires to acquire a further understanding of our burning faith in the Bible, we urge that special attention should be given to our next chapter.

We will endeavour to present in condensed and simple form the main features of the apocalyptic forecast as it has been expounded by the genuine students of all ages, and we will test the expositions of two centuries ago in the light of recent history. The subject is most distasteful, even to the majority of religious people. So are the dreadful facts of modern history and everyday experience. We are bound to face the facts of life, however. Will you try to be impartial and with judicial eyes look at the facts of Revelation?

CHAPTER XVI.

SEALS, TRUMPETS AND VIALS.

The actual exhibition of future events in the book of Revelation begins with the fourth chapter, when the angel said to the Apostle, "Come hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."

John saw a book sealed with seven seals, and it was proclaimed that no one was found worthy to break the seals and open the book. This is an appropriate figure of the future, which is a sealed book to all of us. Christ, referred to under symbols the meaning of which none will challenge, was then exhibited as the one who had prevailed and was found worthy to open the book. A song of adoration followed, and then the seals were opened one by one.

The Revelation is supposed to have been given the last year of Domitian. The thunder clap first mentioned on the opening of the first seal might well be the assassination of that tyrant. The Apostle then beheld a white horse. The rider was crowned with the laurel wreath of victory; he carried a bow, but there is no mention of arrows, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.

It is easy to recognise the horse as a symbol of the great Roman world. The whiteness is indicative of a period of peace, and we may surely recognise the triumphant rider as the Christian Church, conquering without the use of carnal weapons.

After the assassination of Domitian there followed a wonderful period of peace during the reigns of Trajan Nerva, Hadrian and the two Antonines. Gibbon expresses the opinion that could a man have been permitted to choose the period of his life, he would unhesitatingly have elected to live his days under the rule of those monarchs.

On the opening of the second seal a red horse was seen, and the rider, armed with a great dagger, was to take peace from the earth.

In the unfolding of history just such a change occurred. The wise and virtuous Marcus, whose "thoughts" delight thoughtful readers even now, was followed by the profligate Commodus, who prepared the way for the fall of the empire.

Commodus was assassinated. He was followed by the virtuous Pertinax, who in a few days suffered the same fate. Then came the tradesman Julian, who, despite the most extravagant efforts to please the soldiers, only lived for a few weeks after purchasing the barren title of emperor. Three murders of rulers in only a few weeks, and many more followed.

When the third seal was opened a black horse was seen. The rider carried a pair of scales, and a proclamation was made fixing a price for wheat at about eight times as much as it was worth when the revelation was given. This can hardly be described as an enigma. Surely it means famine.

Every student knows that, as the result of the excessive taxation inaugurated by Commodus, some of the land went out of cultivation, resulting in a period of severe distress. The symbolism of the seal, however, suggests some mitigation of the evil in its reference to oil and wine. History agrees, telling us that wiser counsels prevailed, and some of the severities of taxation were relaxed.

On the opening of the fourth seal a pale horse was seen with death as the rider and Hades following.

The word describing the colour of the horse is the one from which we derive the word chlorosis—an extreme form of bloodlessness. This symbol indicates a very anæmic condition of the political body. Such a period followed the partial revival brought about by the energy of Alexander Severus. Internal strife, invasions by barbarians, pestilence and the ever-present results of bad government, all contributed to bring the Roman world into a condition which is aptly described by the symbolism of the fourth seal.

After this there was an improvement in the political conditions of the Roman empire. A succession of wise princes accomplished much in the direction of restoration and reform. Aurelian, Probus, and, supreme among the reformers, Diocletian, restored security and vigour to the Roman empire. Gibbon spoke of this last-named prince in terms of the warmest praise, and there can be no doubt that, judged by worldly standards, he was a great man. The improvements he effected in the general conditions of the empire cannot be disputed. There was, however, a blot on his reign which has been remembered against him to the concealment of his virtues. Everyone has heard of the Diocletian persecution of Christians. For about ten years the Christians were hunted and persecuted in a manner that had never been attempted by any of the other Roman emperors.

Is there not, therefore, something rather significant in the fact that the next seal—the fifth—makes no suggestion regarding famine or anæmia in the political body, but represents the souls of saints under the altar, crying to God because of the way in which their blood is shed on earth?

When the sixth seal was opened we are told that there was a great earthquake, and men are represented as fleeing from the wrath of the Lamb, even the great ones of the earth being unable to stand before Him.

In the language of symbol a revolution, or great upheaval of human affairs, is described as an earthquake. This is not peculiar to the book of Revelation. The figure is employed by ordinary writers of the present day. Unless readers are purposefully stupid they will recognise that the obvious meaning of the sixth seal is that there would be a great revolution, in which paganism would pass away and men would have reason to fear the power of Christ.

Well, Diocletian, who so persecuted the Christians, died in A.D. 305; Constantine, who effected the great change from paganism to a form of Christianity, came to the seat of power in A.D. 323.

We do not suggest that this interpretation of the seals furnishes first-class evidence of the truth and inspiration of the prophecy. Far from it. We think, however, that every candid reader will admit that, whether by chance or by fore-knowledge, the forecast fits in very well with the facts of history. We do not think it can be doubted that every Christian would accept this interpretation as in the main obviously true, but for the inevitable sequence. This, however, is one of those cases in which men are "bound to" accept or reject certain propositions on account of their being either harmonious or discordant with their main convictions.

If you believe that the triumph of Christianity under Constantine was the establishment of the true Church and the setting up of God's kingdom on earth, you are logically bound to repudiate this exposition of the seals, for according to the scheme of the revelation still more terrible and more directly caused judgments from God were to come upon the world after the great earthquake of the sixth seal.

If, however, you are not bound by any such prejudice, please follow this line of exposition for a few minutes. Surely it must be recognised that history bears out the idea of woe to continue and even to increase after the Roman empire had accepted the name of Christ. One can hardly believe in Providence at all without concluding that God has been angry with the nations all the time. His kingdom has not yet come, His will has not been done on earth, evil has gone forth from nation to nation, warfare has increased, the gospel has been corrupted, paid preachers have "made merchandise" of religion by the use of "feigned words,"¹ just in accordance with the predictions of Scripture. During this period Europe has been subject to the most terrible of visitations of warfare, as all readers must admit, whether they regard

(1) Peter, ii., 3.

ambitious warriors as the "sword of the Lord" or whether they think of them as products of adverse chance.

It must be admitted, then, that the trumpets and vials of the book of Revelation, unmistakably indicating as they do the advent of woe for humanity, harmonise with the facts of history. There are repeated references to "the third part" being destroyed or plagued in connection with these trumpet judgments. This refers to the third of the Roman empire. Evil first fell upon the western third. Goths, Vandals and Huns plagued the people of Italy in rapid succession. Again, we may say, whether by chance or as the effect of fore-knowledge, the symbols of the trumpets fit the facts of history. The Goths overran Italy, and thus scorched the "third part" of the Roman earth. The Vandals, under Genseric, revived some of the maritime glories of Carthage and struck a blow at the power of Rome on the sea, as suggested by the words used in connection with the second trumpet. Everyone acquainted with the details of history will recognise that the expression "fountains and rivers of water," indicating the locality of the judgments of the third trumpet, fits in with the history of the Huns. Then, when the Goths captured Rome and put an end to the empire in the west, it was surely an eclipse of political sun and moon for a third part of the Roman world, just as indicated in the judgment of the fourth trumpet.

To this point we admit that the prophecies are not sufficiently definite to provide first-class evidence of inspiration. On the other hand, we think it must be admitted, even by the most determined of opponents, that from the accession of Constantine to the fall of the western empire the course of history was such as to fit in very well with the most rational interpretation of the first four trumpets. The real significance of this matter as Christian evidence lies in the fact that it lays the foundation for the understanding of the far more striking prophecies which followed.

An angel was represented as proclaiming woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the three trumpets, which were yet to sound. It might be thought that the first four trumpets indicated woe enough. What worse could follow? The greater detail and far longer description of the fifth and sixth trumpets suggest a possible answer. The judgments of those trumpets were to be of much longer duration.

It may be stated quite definitely that at least since the days of Joseph Mede no serious and capable exponent of the book of Revelation has felt the slightest doubt as to the application of the fifth and sixth trumpets. There may have been other expositions put forward by egotists who at all costs have aimed at originality. In the same way you may find pseudo-scientists who have written books to prove that the earth is a triangle revolving round the moon, or that the sky is a big blue curtain with holes in it which have been mistaken for stars. There is hardly a limit

to the possible foolishness of egotists, either in the world of science or religion, but surely it would be very weak for genuine students in either subject to be much influenced by them.

We repeat that at least since the days of Joseph Mede the real expositors have felt no doubt as to the interpretation of the fifth and sixth trumpets. The fifth trumpet produced a locust plague to torment the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads. Although locusts are mentioned, the prophecy, by referring to horses and human faces, makes it fairly clear that men and mounted men are meant, with a king over them, a veritable messenger of divine vengeance named the Destroyer. Mede interpreted this to refer to the uprising of the Mohammedan scourge, and the prolonged torment inflicted on the Eastern Roman empire during three hundred years. His exposition settled the question for all time so far as serious students are concerned.

Why do we speak so confidently? The following points will indicate some of the reasons, although we cannot find space to elaborate the argument in detail.

In Hebrew the word for locust is radically the same as the word Arab. The symbol is therefore a particularly suggestive one for the Arabian destroyer. The time period indicated exactly corresponds with the torment of which we read in history. Two periods of five months are mentioned, a total of three hundred days. Three hundred years was the actual duration of this plague. It was expressly stated that the locust power was to inflict torment but not to kill. Accordingly, political death was not inflicted on the Eastern Roman empire until the next woe.

Finally, we may refer to one of those especially rude applications of prophecy which lash to fierce anger some of our religious friends, but which will doubtless be considered by the philosophical reader with a just effort to understand the point of view of simple disciples.

We have before us, as we write, the Bible open at the book of Revelation, chapter ix., and Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" open at chapter li.

From the Bible we read, in connection with the destroying power of the fifth trumpet, "it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing neither any tree, but only those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads."

From Gibbon we read that Abubekr, the immediate successor of Mahomet, commanded his followers: "Destroy no palm trees nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees. . . . You will find another sort of people that belong to the synagogue of Satan who have shaven crowns; be sure you cleave their skulls."

The prophecy of the sixth trumpet has been applied with still greater confidence to the uprising of the Turkish power, and

the passing of Constantinople, the eastern capital of the empire, into Turkish hands.

For reasons aside from the significance of the chronological order of events we may mention the following :—

Four personages are mentioned—evil angels in this case. They are described as being loosed from the river Euphrates, exactly in harmony with the facts of history. They were to “kill the third part of men.” In other words, they were to inflict the political death which had been denied during the previous woe. Accordingly Togrul Beg “crossed the Euphrates at the head of the Turkish cavalry,” as we read in Gibbon’s monumental history, and began a work of conquest and development which, after several centuries, resulted in the overthrow of Constantinople.

The vision mentions many horses in connection with this invasion. Reference is also made to serpent-like tails to these armies, and heads with mouths from which fire and brimstone issued with terrible effect on the enemy. The prophet tells us plainly that he saw the horses in the vision. He evidently also saw other things to which he could not give a name, but which he attempted to describe. If he saw some of the heaviest cannons that have ever been made going into action, how could he have given a better description than this in Revelation ix. verses 17-19? The prophet in vision sees thousands of horses. Hundreds of them are apparently linked together in serpentine form at the rear of the army, dragging forward a monstrous contrivance to which he can give no name. He sees that these monsters have heads with mouths, like lions in that they roar, but unlike anything he has seen before in that “fire and brimstone” streams out of their mouths with terrible effects in slaying the third part of men.

Most people are aware that the Turks were among the first to make extensive use of gunpowder, but few seem to have any idea of the size of the cannons used at the siege of Constantinople over four hundred years ago. It is often assumed that they must have been very small weapons as compared with those of the present day.

If you will consult the Encyclopædia Britannica under the subject “Artillery,” you will find an enlightening description of some truly monster pieces of ordnance which the Turks used in the great siege. One of these was still in working order two centuries later, and capable of hurling a stone shot weighing seven hundred pounds. Such a shot was actually fired, killing or wounding forty men. A cannon capable of throwing a rough stone shot of such weight would need to be at least as large as the greatest of modern guns. In view of the fact that modern methods of imparting strength had not then been discovered, it is probable that these weapons of the Turks were larger than

any that have ever been made since, at least having greater "heads," with thicker masses of metal to resist the strain of the explosion and the attrition of time.

If we can imagine a moving picture of such weapons being dragged into action it would be hard to suggest how a man who had never even heard of firearms could give a better description than this of Revelation.

Finally, we have the time period of this preparation to kill the third part. An hour and a day and a month and a year (see Rev. ix. 15).

Bagdad was taken by the Turks in the year 1057. Commenting on this Joseph Mede says:—

"From this time, therefore, the Turks, having the principal seat of the Saracenic empire with the whole dominion beyond Euphrates, are prepared that after a prophetic day, month and year they should kill the third part of men. That is, in the year of Christ 1453 they should utterly cut off the rest of the Roman Empire in the east, the royal city of Constantinople being taken. For the space from the year 1057 to the year 1453, wherein Constantinople was taken, is precisely 396 years, whereof the day maketh one, the month thirty, the year three hundred and sixty-five."

Mede omits the hour as representing a period so short that in a survey of the broad facts of history our knowledge is not sufficiently perfect to make an application.

Perhaps some of our readers are scornful or perhaps are mildly amused at us for bringing these matters forward. Perhaps they feel that such an exposition can only be regarded as an ingenious manipulation of vague and figurative language to fit the accomplished facts of history.

We are quite aware of the possibility of such manipulation, especially in connection with time periods. We can quite understand the attitude of those who do not believe in these matters. We must ask readers to be patient for a few minutes longer. We have not really begun to state our argument yet. The point we desire to emphasise is this.

Joseph Mede and others not only expounded prophecies relating to events that were past. They also, in the most explicit manner, set on record their expectations as to the future. Their understanding of seals and trumpets involved certain logical necessities in the interpretation of the vials or the last judgment of God. These expectations were put on record in some instances centuries before there was the slightest indication in the political heavens of such developments. We emphasise this point, not because it presents the best of evidence or that the expositions of old writers are necessary to make the matter clear, but merely because these ancient prognostications, based on Bible prophecy, can be forced on the attention even of unwilling ears. Every

honest man who can be induced to look at these matters is bound to recognise that he is in the presence of some startling facts which cannot be set aside by sneers and laughter. Some may be induced to study rather more, and thus to discover how painfully ignorant they were when they so scornfully derided the ignorance of the Christian "simpleton."

As we write we have before us a first English translation of Joseph Mede's "Key of the Revelation." This was translated from the original Latin by Richard More, and the volume in our possession passed through the press in the year 1643.

Joseph Mede had no doubt whatever that the "beast" of the Revelation was a figure for the power of Rome, and that consequently the vials or "seven last plagues" indicated a succession of evils to come upon the papacy and papal powers. It will not be denied that papal powers have suffered very severely on land and sea during the last hundred and twenty years. Napoleon Bonaparte, although nominally a Catholic, imprisoned the Pope. When he directed his energies against Catholic countries he was uniformly successful. He was a terrible scourge to Europe as a whole, but he failed to invade England, and his invasion of Russia met with disaster.

It should not be difficult to understand that a hundred years ago students of prophecy who regarded the papacy as the great enemy should be convinced that the outpouring of the vials of divine wrath had begun.

You may suggest that this is all very vague. You may reasonably demand something more definite before you can begin to sympathise with the extremist's argument. The more definite facts are ready. Remember that from the Protestant point of view the time had arrived for the outpouring of the later vials, and then for a moment give special attention to the following (see Rev. xvi. verses 8-21).

The fourth vial was to be poured upon the sun, resulting in the scorching of men with great heat and the increase of their blasphemies.

The fifth vial upon the seat of the beast, filling his kingdom with darkness and producing still further blasphemy.

The sixth vial upon the river Euphrates, drying up the water thereof to prepare the way for the kings of the East. Under the same vial was to be the preparation for the final great war and the gathering of the nations to Armageddon.

The seventh vial into the air. This is exhibited in the last of the plagues. Its characteristic features are an earthquake such as had never been since there was a nation, the fleeing away of islands and mountains, the final judgment of the mystical Babylon, and the falling upon men of great hailstones, "every stone about the weight of a talent."

Now we might write a volume of exposition without con-

vincing any sceptic that these figures could be reasonably applied to the events of recent history. They would accuse us of moulding the vague language of hyperbole to suit the accomplished facts. We will make no attempt to argue the case, but will simply quote from the exposition of Joseph Mede, written and published more than two hundred and fifty years ago.

“The heaven of the antichristian world is either that supreme and universall authoritie of the Pope or any other excellent regall authoritie whatsoever in the world of the Beast; that is, in the universality of the provinces acknowledging the Pope of Rome for their head. . . .

“Now of these” (lights in the papal heaven) “the most glorious and by far the greatest light of all which shine in the Papall Firmament is the Germane empire the proper inheritance of the House of Austria now for these two hundred years or thereabouts. Is not this therefore the sunne of that Heaven? Now upon this sunne the fourth phyll is even now to be powred out that it being pulled away from the heaven of the Beast and shining to another purpose may burne and torment the inhabitants of the antichristian world even to blasphemy.”

Surely this was at the least a fortunate forecast! The Austrian sun has surely been the subject of an out-poured vial of wrath; it has shone for the support of Protestant Germany instead of for the benefit of the papacy, and it has scorched men with great heat.

Joseph Mede is more definite and confident when he comes to the next vial.

“The fifth phyll is to be powred out upon the Throne or Seat of the Beast. That is Rome itself. Where the holy Ghost hideth not the matter any more with any vaile of figures or allegories haply because of the great light which shall then arise to these prophecies by this most evident signe whereby it shall be cleere what phylls are past what to come.

“Now by this destruction of the citie of Rome . . . the name of the Pope shall not indeed utterly perish, but from thence he shall be deprived of his glory and splendour so that for griefe they shall bite their tongues; in the meantime notwithstanding persevering as yet in their impenitency their hearts being hardened, they will abuse their griefs unto further blasphemy.”

The extinction of the temporal power of the papacy was in the year 1870. The same year witnessed the decree of the Pope's infallibility! We may safely challenge anyone to suggest a combination of circumstances which would more exactly realise the expectations thus expressed by Joseph Mede two hundred and fifty years ago. Deprived of temporal power, they abused their griefs to further blasphemies. You may not accept this view of the case, but can you suggest anything which, from the point of view of the extreme protestant, would better suit the requirements

of this "most evident sign," as it was expounded by Mede? For the moment we are only trying to make you understand the point of view of such men. You may remain superior to them, yet with a little expansion of human sympathy which may enable you to understand their convictions.

The next vial was upon Euphrates, drying up its waters, preparing the way for the kings of the East, while the nations were prepared for the final war.

Listen to Joseph Mede again.

"Mystical Babylon it seemeth shall have her Euphrates even as that ancient Babylon; to wit the *Turkish Empire* as I conceive. . . . Neither will such understanding of Euphrates be without example of Esay himself." (Mede here refers to the eighth chapter of Isaiah verse seven, where the Assyrians are referred to under the figure of the great river.)

"Why should not now this Euphrates of the phyls by the same reason be understood of the Turks? being no less borderers upon Euphrates before their overflowing than the Assyrians, yea the inhabitants of the same tract.

"To this it maketh not a little that the loosing of that great army of horsemen long stayed at that great river Euphrates at the sound of the sixth trumpet (chapter ix. 7) we interpreted to be meant of the Turks, thence to over run the Roman Empire having followed the series of the trumpets and the apt truth of the matter.

"Therefore by the sixth phyll this Euphratian deluge shall be dried up."

Doubtless you are aware that when Mede wrote those words Turkey was one of the strongest powers in the world, both on land and sea. For a century after that time its strength remained undiminished. Then when the decline began events developed so naturally that few observers have seen anything to excite their attention. The symbol of a river first flooding and then gradually drying up exactly fits the case. For the last hundred years the drying up process has been almost continuous. The loss in territory must now amount to nearly two million square miles. Hungary and Transylvania, Greece, Bulgaria, Roumania, Serbia, Montenegro, Cyprus, Tunis, Egypt, Crete, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tripoli and Algeria were all at one time in Turkey's possession. Now all this territory has been lost. In the army and navy, in finance and prestige, the decline has been equally marked. Whether successful or unsuccessful in war, whether with the old form of Government or with a new party loud in the promise of reform, the result has been the same. Turkey has always lost. Twenty years ago a Turkish statesman unwittingly used the figure of Scripture. He declared that the bad administration of the provinces was "drying up the Turkish empire." So at least he was reported as saying by the English

newspapers, and many interested believers in prophecy clipped out the paragraph as an interesting comment coming from such a quarter.

Readers will know how much has happened since then. The Balkan war of 1912 nearly drove the Turks out of Europe. Before there was opportunity to recover, the great European war tempted the Turks to join hands with the Germanic powers. The result is fresh in our minds at the time of writing. Britain and her allies advanced up the Euphrates—the river which is the symbol of the sixth vial—and Bagdad was captured. Later the Turks were driven out of Palestine, and from that time the great war hastened to its end.

There were two other definite predictions in connection with the sixth vial, both of which were fully understood by Joseph Mede and interpreted in plain language in the book before us.

The symbolical Euphrates was to be dried up to "prepare the way of the kings of the East." Mede understood this to involve a restoration of the Jews. It is difficult to see how any close student of Scripture could come to any other conclusion. The evaporation of a literal river would not be necessary to prepare the way for any kings. The drying up of the Turkish power was certainly necessary in view of the fact that the Turks had possession of Palestine. We might quote a hundred passages of Scripture in support of this association of ideas. For the moment, however, this is unnecessary. All we need is to take notice of the fact that two hundred and fifty years ago it was understood that the restoration of the Jews would come under the operation of the sixth vial.

Seventy years ago there were watchers of the signs who felt convinced that the drying up of Turkey had begun, and who eagerly looked forward for the other signs of the sixth vial. At that time there were no Jews in Palestine, or if a few chanced to be there they were the most poverty stricken and wretched of human kind. The edict of Hadrian forbidding the Jews to enter this ancient land had never been revoked.

In the year 1848 a book called "Elpis Israel" was published. The author had read the works of Joseph Mede and of practically all other expositors of repute. He was convinced that the drying up of the Euphratian power had begun, and he looked for the first stages of Israel's return.

It was not until ten years later that there was any definite movement in this direction, and then progress was at first very slow. It is an extraordinary fact that the feebleness of the Zionist movement has been cited by critics as a reason for repudiating the idea that it has anything to do with prophecy. Such criticism is indicative of a deplorable lack of acquaintance with the elementary facts of the subject. The Old Testament prophecies of the restoration agree in representing the work as

gradual. Nothing could be more definite than such a forecast as in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel. The house of Israel is symbolised as a valley of dry bones and the restoration is exhibited as a matter of growth. First merely a "shaking" among the bones, then a formation of skeletons, a growth of flesh and sinew and a covering of skin, but still "there was no breath in them." It needed another proclamation before the spirit of God entered the movement and completed the work.

The writer of "Elpis Israel" did not expect a sudden uprising of Palestine to be chief among the nations. Such a revolution would have falsified the ancient prophecies in which he placed implicit confidence. In view of the fact that the sixth vial appeared to have begun, however, he did expect a shaking among the dry bones of the house of Israel. Ten years later the shaking began. The movement continued until items of news began to appear in Gentile papers; until worldly preachers found it necessary to explain that these events had nothing to do with prophecy; until over fifty Jewish colonies were established in the ancient land with over a hundred thousand of the restored people and with Jewish banks, schools and hospitals.

The great war threw back the movement for a time, but prepared the way for far greater things. The Turk was driven out of the land; Jerusalem was taken, and Britain's great proclamation sounded a trumpet call through all the world to convince all people that whether by the spirit of God or by human caprice there was a real movement towards the restoration of Israel.

A third expectation in connection with the sixth vial was that there would be a great preparation for war among the Gentiles.

Joseph Mede refers to "the horrible and unheard of preparation for warre that is here described." The author of "Elpis Israel" gave great offence at a peace meeting in the year 1851 by telling the people that the optimistic expectations of peace and brotherhood so generally entertained at that time were foredoomed to disappointment. But it is hardly necessary to quote interpretations in this matter. The newspapers have been ringing with reference to Armageddon in connection with the great war. The allusions of journalists, though crude and mistaken, at least show a capacity to understand the meaning of words. The preparation for the great war of Armageddon was to be under the sixth vial. Surely events have justified this prophecy.

The seventh vial was to be poured out into the air. We are not aware that any ancient expositor of Scripture suggested that this would have a literal application. A literal element has been recognised in connection with the earlier vials. The pouring out of the second vial into the sea meant a divine judgment on human naval interests. The pouring of the sixth vial upon the Euphrates meant a judgment on the human interest connected with

that river. Might not the seventh vial into the air on the same principle mean divine wrath upon man in so far as his interests are affected by the literal air?

At least it must be acknowledged that there is something startlingly significant in the fact that just as the sixth vial, according to all the authorities, is hastening to its close, aerial warfare should begin for the first time in human history. The wrath of God with the wicked as His sword had been manifest on land and sea and rivers. Now for the first time it appears in the air. Hailstones drop upon men, the "islands flee away" and mountains "disappear."¹ In modern language, we have lost our insular security, since airships can reach us.

We suggest that this language is at least startling. It is not, however, the most important feature of the vial. The one outstanding fact of the seventh vial is the great earthquake "such as had never been since there was a nation, so mighty an earthquake and so great."

We can speak quite definitely regarding this matter. It was fully understood years ago that this earthquake, like those that preceded it, would be an upheaval in human affairs. The greatest revolution in the history of the world. In Russia and in the central countries of Europe there has already been revolution on a greater scale than has ever been known in the world before. The men of simple faith believe that still greater upheaval in human affairs is yet to come.

Before leaving this consideration of consecutive events we must call attention to another matter in which there has been an extraordinary realisation of the expectations of Bible devotees.

Another series of events dovetailing with those already mentioned and agreeing exactly with the requirements of prophecy in time and circumstance.

It was firmly believed by some students of the Bible at least seventy years ago that England was mentioned under the name Tarshish in prophecies regarding the restoration of Israel in "the latter days." We will try to show the grounds of this conviction in as brief space as possible.

First the Bible refers to a country called Tarshish which could be reached by ships going from the Mediterranean.² It was the land from whence the Tyrians secured their supplies of tin and lead.

It is well known that the Phœnician traders secured large supplies of tin from the ancient mines of the Scilly Islands and Cornwall. On the basis of this one fact Blackie and Sons' "History of England" throws out the suggestion that Great Britain may have been "that mysterious Tarshish lying somewhere beyond the pillars of Hercules."

We would ask you to take special note of this suggestion in

(1) Dr. Moffatt's Translation. (2) Ezekiel, xxvii., 12.

a matter of fact history. Spain was the only other country from whence tin could be secured in those days, so that the field of enquiry is not a large one.

The students of prophecy to whom we refer took full note of this fact regarding the supply of tin, and they added the following arguments, all culled from Bible prophecies:—

Tarshish was to be a great power in the "latter days" when Israel was to be restored.

It was an island power.

It was to be a great maritime power, with its ships among the proud possessions of mankind in the last day of divine judgment.¹

It was to show favour to the Jews.²

It was to be a great merchant power.

It was to be the lion power of the latter days; for in a prophecy regarding the latter days reference is made to "the merchants of Tarshish with all the young lions thereof."³

Any reader who will take the trouble to look up the passages of Scripture cited and study the context in each case can convince himself that these interpretations are not only reasonable but even obvious. Every candid reader must admit that in a political cartoon the young lions alone would be sufficient to identify the British empire, or that there could be no hesitation as to the answer if questions were put based on any of the other points. Which is the great island power of these days? Which the great maritime power? Which the power to show favour to the Jews?

Remember, then, that the ancient tin mines of Cornwall were alone sufficient to make a matter-of-fact historian suggest that Britain was the ancient Tarshish. Remember that the students of prophecy were able to add these six other points of evidence, all pointing in the same direction, and you will surely admit that at least there was reason in their madness.

On the basis of this conviction that Britain was the latter day Tarshish, it was confidently anticipated by the author of "Elpis Israel" that before long England would assume a protectorate over the land of Palestine. That having already shown favour to the Jews in giving them civil liberty, the lion power with its many ships would "bring the sons of Israel from afar their silver and gold with them," and would present them to the Lord in the ancient land of promise. In "Elpis Israel" it was stated in the most definite language that whatever opinions British statesmen held then, they would be forced to play the part assigned to them when the time arrived. This was not all. On the basis of the forty-third chapter of Isaiah, it was concluded that Britain would be the recipient of the "ransom" to be given for Israel in the day of restoration. In other words, that the

(1) Isaiah, ii., 36.

(2) Isaiah, ix. 9; and see also verse 10. What was it the prophet saw in vision?

(3) Ezekiel, xxxviii., 13.

protecting power was to be given such interests in adjacent lands as to be led to the position finally required. The analogy of the "wages" given to the king of Babylon was quoted to illustrate the Biblical use of such language.

We might write many chapters and yet fail to explain the full meaning of this argument to one who had not much studied these matters. There is no need for such elaboration. Here are some solid facts which anyone can grasp. In "Elpis Israel," written in the year 1848, we find these words:—

"God who rules the world and marks out the bounds of habitation for the nations will make Britain a gainer by the transaction. He will bring her rulers to see the desirableness of Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba, which they will be induced—probably by the force of circumstances—to take possession of."

Thirty years later England went into Egypt led by "force of circumstances." The excitement caused by this realisation of expectations is among our earliest recollections. We watched events with interest as the years passed by, and we noted that in spite of many promises to evacuate, England's position in Egypt became more secure.

When the British force, under the command of the late Lord Kitchener, advanced up the Nile, we were sufficiently interested to study some ancient maps giving the old names of lands as near as scholars can place them. We found that the best authorities placed Ethiopia and Seba in the territory which then passed under British influence.¹

Years passed on. The Zionist movement gradually became stronger, so that it was often mentioned in the newspapers, until at last, in the fourth year of the great war, the posters blazed forth the news that the British had entered Jerusalem.

For forty years to our knowledge this has been the subject of continual conversation and expectation among Bible students. When England moved into Egypt the main point of interest lay in the anticipation of the next move, and since then hardly a week—certainly no year—has passed without conversation passing regarding the latest conditions in Palestine and the prospect of Britain taking up her proper position there. The present situation, therefore, seems like the gathering up of many threads of evidence into an unbreakable cord, or like the mathematical demonstration of a problem which was indeed well supported by evidence, but which never previously had been proved.

Perhaps you will say that at the best these are only points of coincidence and you are quite unmoved by them. We will not try to force the point. Please try, however, to broaden your mind so as to understand the point of view of one who was told to expect these things from early days of boyhood. Try also to

(1) See for instance "The Biblical Atlas and Scripture Gazetteer" published by the Religious Tract Society.

make a mental parcel of these latter day prophecies so as to place them with the others already stored. It is only by such an effort to secure the comprehensive view that you will be in any way able to understand the position of one who has all the points mentioned in this book so thoroughly impressed on the mind that the full cumulative force of the evidence can be viewed at any time and without effort.

Let us have a look at our shelves.

THE SHELVES OF MEMORY.

FACTS.

The Jews stated in Scripture to be God's witnesses. It was predicted that they should be scattered among the nations and persecuted. That they should be for a long time without a king or sacrifice.

That they should be a by-word and a reproach.

That in spite of all destructive experience they should always remain a separate and distinct people.

REFLECTIONS.

All this has been fulfilled. It has come about quite naturally, but how did the prophets know?

What other people have remained for two thousand years without a country, persecuted and ill-treated, yet always remaining distinct?

Shelf No. 1.

THE JEWS.

FACTS.

It was predicted that the once fertile land of Palestine should be desolate in the sight of all that passed by for "many generations."

That the worst of heathen should dwell therein and that people should be astonished at its desolate appearance. This has been fulfilled by history.

Shelf No. 2.

THE LAND.

REFLECTIONS.

The land was most favourably situated, and had great natural fertility. When the Jews were driven out, why did not the stronger invading power develop the land more than ever? What man ventured to make this most unlikely prediction that the land should be desolate?

FACTS.

Christianity is a fact. A remarkable man appeared among the Jews about the beginning of the first century, and some claimed that he was the Christ.

His teaching was unpopular in Jewry. He died. A report was spread that he had risen from the dead. The evidence of the first preachers of the resurrection was sufficiently strong to make some modern sceptics suggest the "swoon" theory to account for it. There are some letters which claim to be the work of the Apostle Paul, in which the writer declares that he was a persecutor but was converted by Christ revealing himself as alive.

Shelf No. 3.

CHRIST.

REFLECTIONS.

Were the original proclaimers of the resurrection true men, false men, or mistaken men?

The swoon theory is a far-fetched and unconvincing suggestion to account for only a fragment of the evidence.

FACTS.

That the Scriptures of the Old Testament come out of the custody of the Jews, who reject Jesus.

If they contain no prophecies inspired by God there are no predictions intended to refer to Jesus.

Daniel predicted the coming of an Anointed One to make an end of sin and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and desolation for city and sanctuary was to follow.

Isaiah predicted the coming of one who should be styled Lord of Hosts, who would be a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to the Jew. One who should be chosen by God yet abhorred by the nation. One who should be perfect, sinless but put to death as a sacrifice for sin and for the deliverance of others.

Zechariah predicted the final great deliverance of Jerusalem in the time of restoration, and described the Jews as mourning bitterly on account of One they had pierced just at the time when all their enemies were overthrown, and God pours upon them the spirit of grace and supplication.

REFLECTIONS.

Many attempts have been made to explain these prophecies away on rationalistic lines.

We emphasise the one test already suggested.

If these prophecies had come solely out of the custody of Christians, anyone would have recognised the obvious reference to Jesus, and unbelievers would have denounced them as palpable frauds.

As they come out of the custody of the Jews, in just such degree are they palpable Christian evidence.

Shelf No. 4. THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES.

FACTS.

Ezekiel declared that after the desolation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar Egypt should be a base kingdom, should exalt itself no more, should be ruled by strangers, and there should be no more a native prince. This prophecy has been fulfilled during two thousand years.

Shelf No. 5.

EGYPT.

REFLECTIONS.

All this has come about quite naturally, but how could the prophet foresee it?

His own explanation is that God commanded him.

FACTS.

Daniel predicted the succession of four great powers, beginning with the Babylonian. The fourth was to be the strongest. This fourth kingdom was to be divided so as to be partly strong, and partly broken. Ten kingdoms are hinted at. The broken condition was to continue until the establishment of the kingdom of God, when "the dominion and greatness of the kingdom" shall be "given to the saints of the most high."

A detailed prophecy is given of the development of the ram and goat kingdoms, which are interpreted to refer to the Persians and the Greeks. A still more detailed prophecy is given regarding the division of the fourth great empire and the uprising among the several kingdoms of a diverse power persecuting, seeing, blaspheming, thinking to change times and laws and making war on God's saints for a stated period.

Shelf No. 6.

VARIOUS PROPHECIES.

REFLECTIONS.

It is usual for those who reject prophecy to claim wherever possible that the predictions were written after the events.

In spite of the reverence and fear the Jews have shown for the Covenant name, it has been argued that some of the best of Jewish writers declared "the word of the LORD came to me," and then told the most deliberate of lies in the holy name.

We ask why such strained and unreasonable suggestions to account for so small a part of prophecy?

We claim that the later events of history were predicted quite as clearly as the earlier, only they have been beclouded by the controversies of fierce prejudice.

FACTS.

The Bible predicts the uprise of a false system of Christianity. "With feigned words shall they make merchandise of you."—II. Peter ii. verse 2. "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine . . . they will turn from the truth unto fables."—II. Tim. iv. verse 3.

"The day of the Lord shall not come except there be a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God."—II. Thess. ii. 3-4.

The Apostle John saw among the things to be hereafter a harlot beautiful and bejewelled, among the ten kingdoms to arise. She is positively identified by the angel with the city on seven hills, which reigned over the earth.

A harlot in the symbols of Scripture is always indicative of unfaithfulness to God.

Shelf No. 7. THE RUDE ARGUMENTS.

REFLECTIONS.

It is impossible for a sceptic to see these arguments in quite the light in which they appear to the constant reader of the Bible, inasmuch as he cannot appreciate how great has been the departure from the simple faith and practice of the early Church.

There is a peculiar significance in this prophecy in view of the fact that the true Church is symbolised as a pure virgin who will be ready for Christ at His coming.

Can you really doubt what city was meant? On seven hills and reigning over the kings of the earth?

FACTS.

The book of Revelation claims to come from Christ after His resurrection, to show to His servants things which were to come to pass.

It indicated the following succession of events in the Roman world.

A period of peace. A period of assassination. A period of famine. A period of evil and misfortune of various kinds.

A period of persecution of Christians, followed by a great revolution in which the enemy should fear the name of Christ.

Following this a succession of judgments on land, sea and rivers. Then with the fourth trumpet an eclipse of sun and moon.

The fifth trumpet was applied by old expositors to the uprising of Mohamedanism. The sixth trumpet to the uprising of the Turks.

On the basis of their understanding of these past events, some expositors two hundred and fifty years ago predicted the following succession of events for the last days.

Evil to befall the papacy.

The house of Austria to be turned from the mere support of the papacy to another purpose, bringing great evil to itself and others. The fall of the temporal power of the papacy, accompanied by increase of blasphemy.

The drying up of Turkish Empire like the evaporation of a river. At the same time a "horrible and unheard of preparation for war."

REFLECTIONS.

Events from the assassination of Domitian (that is the year when the Revelation is supposed to have been given) to the success of Constantine conform to this outline of the Seals. Expositors have regarded the judgments of the first three trumpets as fulfilled by the successive invasions of Goths, Vandals and Huns. The eclipse of the third part under the fourth trumpet has been regarded as obviously referring to the establishment of the Gothic kingdom in Italy.

The fifth trumpet was expounded by Joseph Mede and others to refer to the uprising of the Mohamedan power. The exact period of the torment was indicated, and in one part Gibbon's history reads almost like a translation of the Apocalyptic forecast.

The sixth trumpet was applied to the uprising of the Turks. Here again the exact period was indicated, and many clear details given.

It was wholly on the basis of the understanding of past events that expositors were able to foretell the exact course of modern history. We can specify nine consecutive points of fulfilment in right order and time:—

- (1) General evil on papacy and papal countries.
- (2) Special evil on House of Austria, turning it from service of papacy to another and destructive purpose.
- (3) Fall of temporal power.

At the same time the first stages of Israel's restoration. Followed by the greatest revolution the world has ever known, with wrath poured out into the air.

As early as the year 1848 it was definitely predicted that the fall of the temporal power would be in 1866 and the years immediately following.

That Great Britain was mentioned in prophecy as the island, naval, merchant Lion power of the latter days, showing favour to the Jews.

That Britain would go into Egypt led by "force of circumstances." That she would extend her influence further south to the ancient Ethiopia and Seba. That she would afterwards extend her influence into Palestine and favour the restoration of the Jews.

That during this period there would be many labour disputes and general political agitation.

All these statements are facts which can be verified by anyone who is interested.

Date foretold on basis of Daniel's prophecy.

- (4) Drying up of Turkish power.
- (5) Concurrent with this, great preparation for war.
- (6) Concurrent with this, first stages of restoration of Jews.
- (7) Britain's peculiar ascent to power, mercantile, naval, colonial.
- (8) Britain's occupation of Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba.
- (9) Britain's occupation of Palestine and proclamation to Jews.

Shelf No. 8.

THE REVELATION.

Shelf No. 9.—Incidental harmonies and arguments for the reader to fill up as he studies.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANALOGIES AND HARMONIES.

If space had permitted it was our intention to deal in detail with points of evidence which continually occur to the constant reader of the Bible in the incidental harmonies and analogies between widely separated parts.

We shall be content with a very few illustrations of what we mean.

In the Old Testament there are many hints of a future purpose, which are only intelligible in the light of New Testament teaching, and which therefore are indicative of a controlling mind superior to that of the old Hebrew writers. The coats of skins provided for the covering of sin-caused nakedness hinted at the necessity for a sacrifice and a covering garment to be derived from the offering. The acceptance of Abel's offering and the rejection of Cain's, and still more definitely the prophecy of the partial bruising of the woman's seed pointed in the same direction.

The promise to Abraham regarding his seed, taken in connection with the family history, is again significant. It required a miracle to produce Isaac, the father of the Jewish race. Then his father was told to offer him as a sacrifice, and the name of the place where he was to have been slain was called "The Lord will provide."

The Passover when Israel came out of Egypt has associations which cannot easily be explained away by the one who rejects inspiration. The rock which was smitten to provide the people with life-giving water was surely significant in view of the repeated use by Moses of the symbol of a rock for their Lord and Saviour. If a student cares to investigate further he may compare the two occasions when water came from a rock and note the difference in the word used and the instruction given. Then if he possesses a good knowledge of prophecy regarding Christ he will add a remarkable pointer to his store.

When we come to the Law, volumes might be written on these lines. Why was it that a law so far in advance of its age in justice, hygiene and general wisdom should be loaded with the most irksome and apparently useless of ordinances? If all the

applications made by Christians are fanciful, there is something very extraordinary in the series of chances which makes them possible.

The Apostle, in commenting on the law, tells us that the veil of the tabernacle represented the flesh of Christ. He speaks of other Apostles as pillars of the Church. He leaves us to discover by comparison of many parts of Scripture how much more the type suggests. The materials of which the veil was made indicate just the features that are blended in Christ. Scarlet is repeatedly used in the Old Testament as a symbol of sinful flesh, fine linen for righteousness, and purple for royalty. The veil made up of these materials was hung upon four pillars, just as Christ is exhibited to the world by the four evangelists—pillars of the Church. A way had to be made through that veil before it was possible to enter the most holy place. The most holy place could only be entered by the high priest at stated times, and then with a perfect sacrifice.

Finally, we have the suggestive record that the people could not endure to look on the glory of Moses' countenance, and he had to wear a veil to keep them from seeing the divine light that he reflected.

It would be easy to expand these matters into another volume if space permitted. We do not lay too much stress on them, but we suggest that they add to the load of staggering coincidences and cruelly deceptive chances which have led some of the best of men and women astray if the Bible is not what it claims to be.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS.

We will not make any further elaboration of evidence or any increased emphasis of arguments already enunciated. We are confident that all who have read this book will realise that we are fair in our statement of facts, and that the conclusion drawn by men of simple faith is at least intelligible.

We are fully aware of many objections that have been raised by sceptics in the name of science. We respect these difficulties and we can sympathise with the unbelievers' point of view. It is obvious, however, that there is grave danger of misinterpretation, whether we study the ancient writings of Hebrew prophets or the book of Nature, and we entertain a rude conviction that there is in one respect at least, a humiliating resemblance between the ignorant disciple of Christ and the learned scientist. Each is inclined to place over much confidence in his interpretation where his studies have been imperfect, and each is disposed to treat with contempt matters which he has not studied at all. We may leave it an open question as to whether there are any instances of irreconcilable discord between Nature and the Bible as we now possess it. There can be no question, however, that in many cases the apparent contradiction is through faulty interpretation on one side or other, or both.

We hope that we have stated an argument which will in some degree tend to soften the asperities of controversy and render more intelligible the pertinacity of those who look for a complete realisation of all the promises of Scripture.

Is it utterly impossible that the men of simple faith should be right after all? Surely it may be true that there is a final object in the history of this beautiful but blemished earth and in the painful struggles of humanity. We ask from whence come the evils of bloodshed and pestilence and the persistent shadow of mortality? We may also ask from whence come the soul of mankind, the bejewelled sphere on which we live, the sense of good and the mystery of love?

Many of the greatest of scientists have felt it impossible to believe that all life has evolved by chance from a ball of molten matter. Sometimes they have sought consolation in the shadows,

with the light of their learning as dim as their darkened rooms. Other thinkers make an illogical compromise between faith and scepticism, trying to avoid the responsibility of full belief and yet drawn toward the light of Christ.

It seems to us reasonable to believe that there is a world of life above as there is below. It seems quite possible that humanity is suffering for its sins, and that the Creator, in "staining the pride of human glory," adopted a method of revelation such as would not occur to the wisdom of man.

Thus, as it appears to us, we have a collection of writings claiming to be the product of revelation, offending our sense of propriety and arousing our antagonism at every turn, yet better supported by evidence than any other proposition in the world.

THE END.