

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT EXAMINED.

WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT SAYS
ABOUT ITSELF.

BY

JULIAN,

*Author of "The Popular Faith Exposed," "Bible Words: Human,
not Divine," "The Pillars of the Church," Etc.*

ISSUED FOR THE

Propagandist Press Committee.

LONDON :
WATTS & CO., 17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET St.
Price One Penny.

OUR PROPAGANDIST PRESS COMMITTEE.

THIS Committee has been formed for the purpose of assisting in the production and circulation of liberal publications.

The members of the Committee are Mr. G. J. Holyoake, Dr. Bithell, Mr. F. J. Gould, Mr. Frederick Millar, and Mr. Charles A. Watts.

It is thought that the most efficient means of spreading the principles of Rationalism is that of books and pamphlets. Many will read a pamphlet who would never dream of visiting a lecture hall. At the quiet fireside arguments strike home which might be dissipated by the excitement of a public debate. The lecturer wins his thousands, the penman his tens of thousands.

The aim of the various writers will be to obtain converts by persuasiveness rather than undue hostility towards the popular creeds.

All who are in sympathy with the movement are earnestly requested to contribute towards the expenses as liberally as their means will allow. The names of donors will not be published without their consent.

On the 31st of January of each year a report and balance-sheet will be forwarded to subscribers. The books of the Committee are always accessible to donors.

Contributions should be forwarded to Mr. Charles A. Watts, 17, Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C. Cheques should be crossed "Central Bank of London, Blackfriars Branch."

PUBLICATIONS ISSUED FOR THE COMMITTEE BY
MESSRS. WATTS & CO.

Agnostic Problems. Being an Examination of Some Questions of the Deepest Interest, as Viewed from the Agnostic Standpoint. By R. Bithell, B.Sc., Ph.D. Cheap Popular Edition, cloth, 2s. 6d. post free.

Id. each, by post 1½d.,

Agnosticism and Immortality. By S. Laing, author of "Modern Science and Modern Thought," etc.

Humanity and Dogma. By Amos Waters.

What the Old Testament Says About Itself. By Julian.

The Old Testament Unhistoric and Unscientific. By Julian.

LIBERTY OF BEQUESTS COMMITTEE.

THIS Committee has been formed for procuring the passing of a law legalising bequests for Secular and Free Thought purposes. As the law now stands, all legacies left for the diffusion and maintenance of Secular or Free Thought principles can be confiscated.

Subscriptions in furtherance of the object of this Committee may be sent to Mr. George Anderson, Hon. Treasurer, 35a, Great George Street, London, S.W.

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT EXAMINED.

PART I.

WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT SAYS ABOUT ITSELF.

PROBABLY every person who reads this little work knows that a part of the Bible is called the "Apocrypha," a word which means "reserved for the initiated," or "kept back from the general public."

Exoteric and Esoteric Disciples.—In all the ancient religions there were two classes of disciples—the exoteric and the esoteric. The exoteric were the general auditors, the esoteric the real disciples, initiated into the secret and hidden meaning of the words employed by the master. Thus, when Pythagoras taught in his schools that wise men should "beware of beans," the general public supposed he meant that beans were to be avoided as a food; but he privately told his true disciples that he meant: Do not interfere with politics, lotteries, or ballot-boxes, in which votes were taken by beans, as we now take them by slips of paper or small ivory balls.

You will remember that, when Jesus had spoken a parable to the Jewish mob, his disciples frequently came to him in private, and asked him to explain to them the esoteric or secret meaning of his words. The initial verses of the Fourth Gospel afford a good example, where the words "Logos," "darkness," "light," and so on, have a double meaning—one open, and one remote or concealed. Now, the latter may be called the Apocrypha, and we are told by Ezra or Esdras that Moses gave one Pentateuch to the general public, but another to the initiated. The exact words are: "In the bush I

[Jehovah] did manifestly reveal myself unto Moses, and talked with him when my people served in Egypt. And I sent him to lead my people out of Egypt, and I brought him up to the Mount of Sinai, where I held him by me a long season. And I told him many wondrous things, and showed him the secret of the times and of the end; and I commanded him, saying: *These* words shalt thou declare [openly to the PEOPLE]; but *these* thou shalt hide [from the general, and declare only to the INITIATED]."* Similarly, as we shall see by-and-by, Jehovah commanded Ezra to write certain books, one of which was to be published abroad, and seventy others were to be reserved for the priesthood. The Apocryphal books were the foundation of what is called tradition.

The Apocrypha.—In the Old Testament, till quite modern times, there were thirty-eight books, fourteen of which are omitted in all Bibles now published by the Bible Society. These fourteen books were first called "The Apocrypha," in 1380, by John Wyclif the Reformer; but they still continue parts of the canonical Scriptures in all Catholic Bibles.

Why Ignored by Protestants.—Rigid Protestants ignore these fourteen books entirely. But the Church of England, trimming between Catholics and Puritans, teaches that the Apocrypha is excellent for Christian instruction and example, but is not to be used for doctrine and dogma. The words of the article are as follows: "Whatsoever Book is in the Old Testament besides the twenty-four [mentioned] shall be set among the Apocrypha—that is [books] without authority of belief. The Church doth read them for example of life and instruction of manners, but doth not apply them to establish any doctrine."

I am quite prepared to allow that much of the Apocrypha is extremely foolish, and undoubtedly mere fable; but what else can be said of the talking serpent and the talking ass? and on the former of these stories is founded the great Church doctrines of original sin, the fall of man, and redemption or paradise regained. The tale is

* 2 Esdras xiv. 3-6.

that the Devil metamorphosed himself into a snake, and chatted with Eve in familiar converse, just like a neighbour-gossip. Having persuaded the silly, vain woman to taste a certain fruit, because it would make her clever, sin entered the world with all its evils, including death and Hell.

The Strange Part of the Story.—Now, what is very strange in this marvellous story is this: The prating snake was no snake at all, but the Devil; and the whole serpent tribe was cursed because the Devil acted a lie. “On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life” was, in reality, said to the Devil; but somehow it got transferred to the race of serpents, who were as innocent as young lambs. The serpent did not assume the form of the Devil; but the Devil assumed the form of a serpent. Suppose his Satanic Majesty had assumed the form of an archangel, as he sometimes did, would the curse have fallen on all the hierarchy of Heaven?—“on your bellies shall ye crawl, and dust shall ye eat” henceforth, instead of the fruits of Paradise; yet one would have been just as wise, just as fair, as the other. However, we meet a parallel case in the New Testament, when a legion of foul fiends took up their abode in a herd of swine; the *swine* were killed for the demoniacal trick. This is just as if a burglar broke into the mansion at Sandringham, and the Prince of Wales, his wife, children, and domestics were all hanged instead of the burglar. If I choose to dress up like an African and steal the Crown jewels, surely the Queen would not send her armies into Africa, and reduce all the inhabitants to slavery. Then why should snakes and serpents be punished because, without their knowledge and consent, Satan masqueraded as a snake in order to tempt Eve to disobedience? But the mystery does not end here. Evidently the serpent tribe before then were not creeping things; for a part of the curse was “on thy belly shalt thou go” henceforth. Now, Satan does not go on his belly, and does not eat dust all the days of his life. At least, I suppose so. Certainly he did not crawl on his belly like a snake when he tempted the Nazarene in the wilderness, and carried him to the pinnacle of the temple, and to a mountain so

exceedingly high that Jesus could see thence even the Antipodes, as well as the kingdoms of the northern half of the globe. Telescopes have done something for us; but we have not yet invented an instrument which can show us our Antipodes. As Satan, the aggressor, escaped this curse, it fell wholly on the innocent party, who were as guiltless as you or I.

These manifest fables, these illogical stories, these palpable contradictions, make us pause to believe that they can be the words of truth and soberness. I cannot bring my mind to believe that a God of Justice and Wisdom would punish innocent serpents because the Devil chose to assume their form; nor can I believe that he killed a whole herd of swine because a legion of devils were supposed to have taken up their abode in the pigs. I cannot believe that snakes and serpents are now creeping things, because Satan played them this trick. But, if the tale of the serpent is not true, then the tale of the "fall," the dogmas of "original sin" and of "redemption," are false also, and the whole Bible scheme falls to ruin like a child's card-house.

There is nothing in the Apocrypha more illogical and foolish than these two tales of the canonical Scriptures, and not all the concensus of all the fathers, Hebrew or Christian, can render the story of the Serpent and Eve credible.

I really must press upon my readers the supreme importance of this remark. We are too apt to dwell exclusively upon the amiable character of Jesus, his going about daily doing good, his suffering, his resurrection, and ascension into Heaven. We feel that the wonderful miracles ascribed to him were wholly beyond the power of man. We feel that his conception by the Holy Ghost accounts in some measure for his claim of being god as well as man. We feel that his resurrection by his own innate will makes him the potentate of life and death, and that his ascension into Heaven has restored him to the throne which, we are told, he abandoned in order to become man. Looking at these things alone, we see no great difficulty in believing that this extraordinary person might be divine. If divine, he was God incarnate, or God in the fashion of a man. If

he was God, who had merely assumed for the nonce the likeness of man, he did it that he might die. If he did not die on the cross for his own misdeeds, he died for our redemption. If he died for our redemption, he was our federal head in the New Dispensation. Before this, man was in the Old Dispensation, that of Adam; but after the death on the cross he was transported from the dispensation of the first Adam into that of the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

Now mark how all this hangs together. We all know that the strength of a chain cable is only that of its weakest link, and so the truth of this long story is wholly dependent on the weakest portion of the story.

If man was never under the dispensation of Adam, he could never be removed therefrom into the dispensation of the new Adam. If there is no transmitted sin, there was no original sin to be nailed to the cross. If Adam never bit the forbidden fruit, he never committed that sin of disobedience, and could not have transmitted the transgression to his posterity. He was a clean fountain, and sent forth clean water—not a polluted spring from which issued a polluted stream. There was nothing to redeem, no muddy water to purify, no birth sin to wash away. If, therefore, the tale of the prating serpent is rejected, the death of Christ to abolish the evil consequences of the “fall” must be rejected also. If the Devil, in the guise of a snake, did not talk to Eve, impose upon her vanity (and remember she had no vanity, for she was not yet in sin), and induce her to eat the fruit of the “Wisdom Tree,” then the death of Jesus to abrogate these consequences is wholly a misconception. He may have died, but he did not die to abolish the fatal consequences of Eve’s listening to the words of a serpent, inasmuch as there was no such serpent.

Just as far as this tale of the Devil is true, the hypothesis of redemption is true. Just as far as the iniquitous judgment passed on the reptile race, because the Devil played them a most scurvy trick, is true, so far and no further the atonement of Christ is true. If the Almighty did not punish snakes because Satan on one occasion pretended to be a snake, then Christ did not die upon the cross because God *did* do so. If, in fact,

Paradise was never lost as related in the foolish and most illogical tale told us in Genesis, it could never be regained as we are told it was in the Gospels.

Do look for a moment at the tissue of nonsense and contradiction in this Jewish myth. Surely never Æsop could have strung together anything more utterly improbable :—

We have man made in the image of God, who has no image at all ; no likeness of anything in heaven or earth ; no form ; no parts.

We have Adam, though perfect in holiness and innocence—perfect as God could make him, perfect as God himself—guilty of disobedience ; and by this one act of disobedience “ guilty of the whole law ”—by this one act of disobedience made to rank with liars, adulterers, thieves, and murderers, the children of the Devil and the heirs of Hell.

We have a serpent, which was no serpent at all, but the Devil in masquerade.

We have reptiles before they were reptiles ; because the condition of “ creeping ” was not yet imposed upon them.

We have a godly, immaculate woman, fresh from the hands of the Almighty, described as vain, conceited, credulous, wilful, and hungering to know the difference between good and evil.

We have innocent beasts (serpents) punished eternally for doing something which they did not do.

We have the guilty Devil let off scot-free, and permitted to roam the earth, through all time, to plan more mischief and ruin millions of souls yet unborn.

And we have, in addition to all this, the sin of all sins—the teeth of all mankind set on edge, because thousands of years ago a silly woman chose to eat sour grapes.

And, mark ye, if every word of this tissue of nonsense is not precisely true, the whole story of redemption falls to the ground, for one hangs on the other as cause and effect.

Religion the Invention of Priests.—Every religious mystery has had, and still has, its hierarchy, whose *ergon* it is to uphold its mythology. The rabbis and

Christian fathers did the same; but their consensus is not of the slightest value and authority beyond that of the priests of Egypt, China, Hindustan, old Greece and Rome, Etruria, Persia, or any other priesthood. All they can do is to say: "Such is our mythology, and these are our books."

The Apocrypha Worthy of Credit as Other Scriptures.—We have somewhat run away from our immediate subject, the Apocrypha, but have shown there is no earthly reason why the fourteen half-and-half books are not just as worthy of credit as the twenty-four selected by the compilers of our articles in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

We said above that these fourteen books were first called "The Apocrypha" in 1380, by John Wyclif, the Yorkshire Reformer. Before that time they were called "Hagiographa." And it must be distinctly borne in mind that all copies of the Old Testament in the first three centuries of the Christian era contained the Apocrypha without the slightest intimation that it differed in authority and character from the twenty-four books stamped with the authority of our Protestant reformers. The Council of Trent in 1546 distinctly recognised its equal authority and "inspiration" with any other parts of Scripture. It forms part of the Septuagint always used by Jesus called the Christ; it is universally attached to the version published in 1609 by the English colony of Douay; and the Catholic Church to the present hour considers it an integral part of the Old Testament. The main reason why the reformers disliked it is because certain doctrines, such as purgatory and prayers for the dead, which they objected to, are supported on the authority of these books; but this looks very like selecting Scripture because it squares with preconceived opinions, and not forming religious doctrines on the authority of Scripture. The Church first draws out its own platform, and then selects such books as correspond therewith, and rejects whatsoever makes against them. That is, the Church makes the Bible, and not the Bible the Church. I grant that the nation makes its laws, not the laws the nation; and a master makes the rules to be observed in his house, not the rules the master; but the things are not parallel.

In the latter cases the nation and the master are free to do as they like ; but the Church pretends to be the mere exponent of Jehovah, the interpreter of his laws, the executive of his government, and every iota of their own introduction is imposition and forgery. It is living and acting a lie ; palming off their own counters as the current coin of the kingdom of God. If the Bible is God's digest, no human council can possibly introduce a single dogma or doctrine. The law and the testimony is the one and only authority, and everything besides is false coin and religious treason. Take the dogma of the Vatican Synod in 1870—the Immaculate Conception. Where is that found in the Bible? Nowhere. But, if synods are the Church legislators, then plainly the Church is only a human institution. It is not God's Church, but merely a synodical Church. It is not under the hand and teaching of God, but under the hand and teaching of human boards, which may vote one thing to-day and something else to-morrow ; one thing in the east and another in the west ; one thing with the dominant party of sect A, and another thing with the dominant party of sect B. Practically, this is done all the world over. A set of men make a platform : those who like its planks join the set ; those who do not, look out for another sect which they like better ; but, as for God's word, it is made by the Church the mere testimonial to a quack medicine—all very well so long as it fadges with their own platform ; but the moment it runs counter thereto it is wrong, it must be whittled down, it speaks in metaphor, the letter killeth, it is man's interpretation which giveth life. If science, history, or synods run counter to the Bible, the Bible, as the weaker vessel, must go to the wall.

The Two Books of Esdras.—Returning to the Apocrypha, you know that two of the books are entitled "Esdras," another form of Ezra. This Ezra or Esdras was a Jewish priest, born probably during the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. Artaxerxes, the Long-handed, King of Persia, gave him a commission to return to Jerusalem and take with him as many exiles as wished to return. We are told that only 1,754 persons availed themselves of this permission, thirty-eight of whom were

Levites; all the rest of the captives preferred to remain in the rich cities and fertile lands of the Persian king. This speaks highly for the prosperity of the people and the mild rule they were under. Probably the Mosaic religion was unknown among them, except perhaps by a few antiquaries, and certainly it was a matter of indifference to them. Sixty years before, the King of Babylon had carried away captive 10,000 princes and mighty men of valour, besides craftsmen and smiths. This would amount to something like 300,000 in all. So that less than one man out of 150 was willing to return. This does not say much for the Jewish theocracy. Above 149 out of every 150 preferred the government, laws, religion, and customs of the Persians and Babylonians to the vaunted government and religion of Jehovah.

The Old Testament Unknown and not Cared for.— You must not suppose that the Jews had Bibles as we now have. Apparently, in the reign of Josiah, there was one, and only one, in the whole kingdom of Judea; but not a single copy among all the ten tribes of Israel. Josiah reigned about 100 years before the Captivity. Apparently “the Law of Moses”—that is, the Pentateuch—was neither read nor even consulted by the Jews, for, when Hilkiyah the priest accidentally stumbled on a copy in some rubbish-heap of the Temple, it was announced to the king as a wonderful discovery, and as much fuss was made about it as if we were now to light upon, in some out-of-the-way store, a MS. copy of old Homer.

There is not the least likelihood that a copy was taken by the captives to Babylon. All that the Jews knew about Moses and his religion they learnt by hearsay, just as the Greeks and Romans knew about their mythology. It was a system taught by their priests, and we know from our own history of the mediæval ages how utterly worthless and untruthful such hearsay religion always is. Read our old English Chronicles, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth, and see what reliance can be placed on hearsay history; and there is no reason to suppose that the Jews differed in this respect from the ancient Britons. History, as a matter of fact, is quite a

modern science, a thing born in the last half of the nineteenth century; before then it was the record of floating tradition, cooked, dressed, and salted by romancers, as historical novels were in the Walter Scott period. There is a sort of truth in "Ivanhoe" and the "Talisman;" but it is the traditional grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff, or needle in a bottle of hay. We know what such religion must always be—a series of marvels and superstitions, trifling incidents magnified and grossly exaggerated, a row in the streets transformed into a great battle, a rioter knocked down by a policeman exalted into a martyr, and some ringleader of the mob immortalised as a Caius or Tiberius Gracchus. Who now believes the battle of Lake Regillus, so graphically sung by Macaulay, to be an historic fact? or that Castor and Pollux, on their heavenly steeds, led the Romans to victory? Yet such romance was Roman history. Who now believes in the marvellous feats of Horatius and his two comrades at the Bridge?—a tale of blood-stirring interest, and at one time as firmly believed as text of Holy Writ. There is no tale in the Old Testament so well attested as these Roman tales. There were feast days kept in their honour with as much gravity as we keep Christmas Day or Good Friday. Historians and poets referred to them, and biographers delighted to trace up pedigrees to some hero who fought and died at these mythical engagements. I maintain that Aulus the Dictator, who led the Romans in the Battle of Lake Regillus, is as worthy of credit as Joshua, who overturned the walls of Jericho by too-tooing on seven silver trumpets. I maintain that the tale of Castor and Pollux fighting for the Romans is every bit as likely as the angel which led the host of the son of Nun to victory after the passage of the Jordan.

“ So Aulus spake, while buckling
 Tighter black Auster's band,
 When he was aware of a princely pair
 That rode at his right hand.
 So like they were, no mortal
 Might one from other know;
 White as snow their armour was,
 Their steeds were white as snow.....
 And Aulus, the Dictator,

Scarce gathered voice to speak—
 ‘Say by what name men call you?
 What city is your home?
 And wherefore ride ye in such guise
 Before the ranks of Rome?’”

And the two celestial horsemen told Aulus they were Castor and Pollux, and concluded with these words:—

“‘Tis for the right we come to fight
 Before the ranks of Rome.’”

Turn now to the Book of Joshua, ch. v., the last three verses: “And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold there stood a man over against him with a sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua said to him, ‘Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?’ And the man said: ‘As captain of the Lord’s host am I come.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship” the heavenly visitant. It was Castor and Pollux come to help Joshua, as they helped Aulus; and one tale is just as likely as the other.

Ezra Read to the People his own Version of the Books of Moses.—Well, Ezra, at the king’s bidding, went to Judea, and thirty-eight men of the priestly tribe were willing to cast in their lot with him. What he did in Judea we are not told; but probably he left his little colony there and returned to Babylon. Thirteen years later we find him again in Jerusalem with Nehemiah, reading to the people “the Book of the Law.” The exact words are (Nehemiah viii.): “Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, and read therein before the street that was before the Water-gate; [he read] from morning until mid-day.....and all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law. And on the second day he read to the people about the Feast of Tabernacles, and all the people went forth and brought boughs to the roofs of their houses.....and sat under the boughs.”

Inferences.—Before we proceed any further it will be well to make one or two passing observations.

Manifestly, the Book of the Law was a new thing to these Jews, for when Ezra read it the words came to them as a surprise. Apparently they never before heard

about the Feast of Tabernacles, and, like children, they made themselves bowers on their house-tops and played living in tabernacles. They had been born and brought up in Babylonia, and evidently knew nothing of the Five Books of Moses. Probably they scarcely knew the name, except, perhaps, as our unlettered hinds may have heard about King Arthur.

The question hence arises, Where did Ezra get his book from? Happily we are not left in doubt upon the subject, for he himself tells us all about it in 2 Esdras xiv.

How Ezra Got his Bible.—Ezra says, as he sat under an oak tree, there came a voice to him out of a bush hard by and said: "Esdras, Esdras!" Whereupon I answered, "Here I am, Lord," and I stood upon my feet. And the Lord bade me go and reprove the people for their sins. So I answered and said, "I will go and do as thou commandest; but when I am dead, who will then be able to teach the people the way of life? for the Book of the Law [that is, the Jewish Bible] has been burnt, and no man knoweth the things that have been done of thee, O God. If, now, I have found favour in thy sight, send the Holy Ghost into me, and I will write out all that hath been done from the beginning of the world, even all that was written in the Book of the Law, that men may find thy path, and that those who live in the latter days may live."

And the Lord said to me: "Go thy way, Esdras, and prepare thee a goodly number of boxwood tablets; and take with thee five men [names given] skilled in writing quickly. And when thou hast written what is in thy heart, *some* of the things thou shalt *publish abroad*, and some thou shalt show *only to the wise*. To-morrow, at this hour, shalt thou begin to write."

So I retired from the sight of man with the five scribes for forty days into a field, and remained there. But no sooner had I retired from the sight of man than the Voice came to me again, saying: "Esdras, open thy mouth and drink what I give thee." So I opened my mouth, and he reached me a cup full of something like water, but the colour of it was like fire. And I took and drank it, and when I had so done my heart uttered understanding, and wisdom grew in my breast, for my

spirit strengthened my memory. And the five men wrote the wonderful visions. For forty days they wrote all day long, and at night they ate bread. As for me, I spake in the day, and held not my tongue by night. And in the forty days the men had written 204 [the margin says 904] books.

And the Highest said to me: "The *first* that thou hast written *publish openly*, that the worthy and the unworthy may read it; but the seventy last *keep back*, and show only to the *wise* among the people, for in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge." And I did so.

Such is the account given by Ezra himself; but there are one or two things extremely puzzling. The scribes, we are told, wrote out 204 or 904 books. What, then, is meant by the *first* and the seventy *last* of these books? Seventy and one neither make 204 nor 904. It is pretty plain, however, that the *first* was the common Bible, or Old Testament, to be read by and to the people; but that there were seventy other esoteric books, to be shown only to the learned priests. These Apocryphal Scriptures, like the Sibylline books, furnished traditions whenever the priests required support.

Another difficulty is this: What is meant by "in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge"? Does it mean in the seventy Apocryphal books is wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, or in the "wise" to whom these books were to be shown? Either way, it is quite certain only a very small portion of the Bible was given to the general public; the main part was kept back, as strong meat unfit for babes.

The most important lesson, however, taught by this extract is, *first*, there was but one Book of the Law in all Judea, and that was burnt or destroyed by fire. Ezra says he was the only man who knew it more or less perfectly by heart, and he retired to a field for forty days, and wrote out from memory what we now call the Five Books of Moses, probably including Joshua, and other "Historical Books" of the Old Testament. For this task he was qualified by drinking a cup-full of some strong liquor, of the substance of water and the colour of fire.

Internal evidence corroborates this tale, for it is quite certain that many things could not possibly have been written till long after the death of Moses; and all such remarks as "which remain unto this day" show to demonstration that the writer lived long, long after the event recorded. Of course, Moses and Joshua could not have written the records of their own deaths. And such a remark as "There has not arisen a prophet since like unto Moses" must have been written after the days of the prophets, which would bring us to the time of Ezra. Similarly, when it is said at the close of Joshua that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua," it is manifest that these words must have been written after the "days of the elders," and probably a considerable time after.

If the Old Testament is merely the reproduction of Ezra, written in forty days from memory, and obviously interpolated, it is not much to be depended on. Six weeks is but a short time for such a task, and a slippery memory may account for many palpable errors. But, what is worse than all this, Ezra had an object, was very strongly biassed, was brought up in Babylon in the very darkest period of Jewish history; and, as "no man living" knew the Bible except Ezra, there was no one to check him or correct his box-wood tablets. No doubt Ezra was a learned man, as learning then went with the captive Jews; but it is wholly impossible now to tell where his memory halted, where he touched up his narrative, as the Catholics touched up the New Testament, and to discriminate between the original text and the interpolations introduced. Such a book can, in no sense, be called the Word of God; and it is a gross falsehood to affirm that not a word, not a letter, not even a point, has been added thereto or taken therefrom. This is palpably incorrect, and, being so, if any part belongs to the original text, the version we possess is a comparatively modern recension by Ezra after the Captivity. He tells us so himself; internal evidence corroborates his statement; and, if this is denied, the gainsayer is bound to produce a more plausible theory.