

CT 104

# OUR FIRST CENTURY.

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πέρα τὸ φῶς ἰδεῖν.

*Choephoree, 961.*

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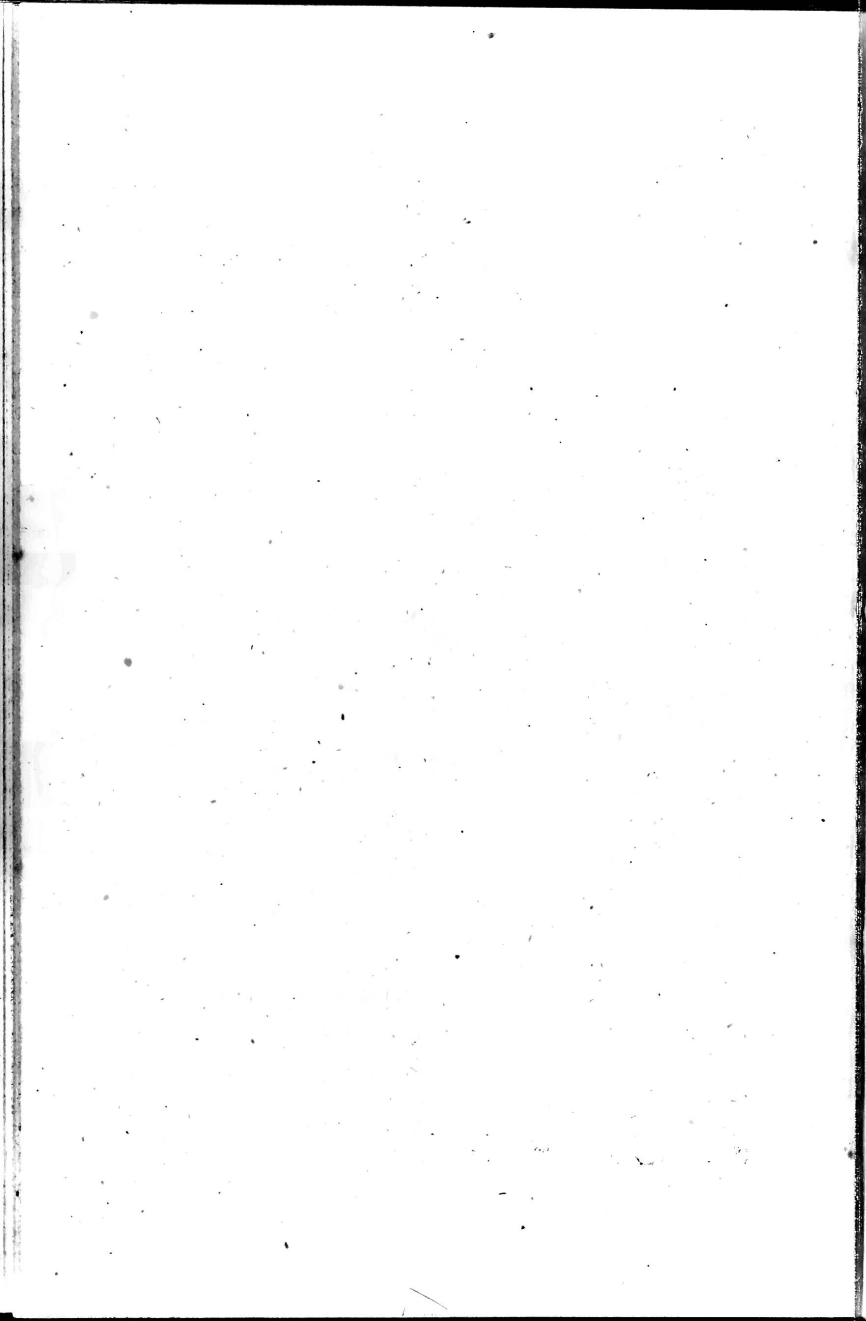
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## P R E F A C E.

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**E**USEBIUS, who flourished A.D. 315, is the earliest historian of the Christian Church. In the first chapter of his Ecclesiastical History he complains, even at that early date, of the scantiness of his materials. We know that when commencing to write the account of the mythical Grecian heroes and their forces who fought in the Trojan War, the author of our Iliad (ii. 284-6) invoked the aid of the Muses, "for," he says, "ye are goddesses, and are present to help and know all things, while we hear only a rumour, and have not certain knowledge of any thing." In like manner, and because he too, by his own account, had little, if any thing, but rumour for the groundwork of his story, Eusebius, in the preface to his work, makes the following invocation:—

"I shall go back to the very origin and the earliest introduction of the dispensation of our Lord and Saviour, the Christ of God.—But here, acknowledging that it is beyond my power to present the work perfectly and unexceptionably, I freely confess it will crave indulgence, especially since, as the first of those that have entered upon the subject, we are attempting a kind of trackless and unbeaten path. Looking up with prayer to God as our guide, we trust, indeed, that we shall have the power of Christ as our aid, though we are utterly unable to find even the bare vestiges of those who may have travelled the way before us ; unless, perhaps, what is presented only in

the slight intimations which some in different ways have transmitted to us in certain partial narratives of the times in which they lived ; who, raising their voices before us, like torches at a distance, and as looking down from some commanding height, call out and exhort us where we should walk, and whither direct our course with certainty and safety. Whatsoever, therefore, we deem likely to be advantageous to the proposed subject, we shall endeavour to reduce to a compact body by historical narration. For this purpose we have collected the materials that have been scattered by our predecessors, and culled, as from some intellectual meadows, the appropriate extracts from ancient authors. In the execution of this work we shall be happy to rescue from oblivion the successions, if not of all, at least of the most noted apostles of our Lord, in those churches which even at this day are accounted the most eminent ; a labour which has appeared to me necessary in the highest degree, as I have not yet been able to find that any of the ecclesiastical writers have directed their efforts to present any thing complete in this department of writing."

All these statements of Eusebius are fully corroborated by the scanty narratives of Mosheim at the commencement of his "Institutes," and of all other writers who have attempted to give a *history* of the Christian Church during the first century of its supposed existence. They might as well have attempted to write a *history* of the famous War, supposed to have been waged on the plain between the rivers Simois and Scamander :—

"Where many shields and helmets fell in the dust,  
And the race of demigod men."

KILFEREST,  
*Feast of St Anastasius, 1873.*

## OUR FIRST CENTURY.

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### ISRAEL IN ALEXANDRIA.

SO far back in the history of the Jews as B.C. 588, they had formed a settlement in Ægypt. This we know from Jeremiah (xliii. 7), who was hostile to its formation. The impossibility of these Jews having access to the temple at Jerusalem, and, owing to its destruction, their losing the benefit of the daily sacrifice which used to be offered there, were facts through which the literal observance of the Mosaic ritual came to a violent end. The Jews in Ægypt, therefore, were compelled either to relinquish the Mosaic law altogether or understand it in a new sense. They adopted the latter course. But that law had not any second meaning. So, when a second meaning was sought for, it could not be found. In the meantime these Jews, at a later period, learned the Greek language, read books of the Grecian philosophers, entertained certain Grecian ideas, and so became Hellenists.

This Hellenizing tendency found its most active development at Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, B.C. 332. When Ptolemy, son of Lagus, captured Jerusalem, B.C. 320, he carried away a large number of Jewish and Samaritan captives to Alexandria, where he gave them the full citizenship. Many others migrated thither of their own accord. Accord-

ing to Josephus, Alexander himself assigned to the Jews a place in his new city. But, be that as it may, it is certain that at an extremely early period in the history of Alexandria, the Jews became so numerous in that city that the north-east angle was known as "the Jews' quarter." The religion and philosophy in that city produced an effect on the Jews there, more powerful than the influence of politics or commerce. Alexander had founded a temple of Isis side by side with temples of the Grecian gods. Creeds from the east and from the west coexisted there; and in after times the mixed worship of Serapis was characteristic of the Greek kingdom in Ægypt. For that god, originally a native of Pontus, and adored by the inhabitants of Sinope, was introduced into Ægypt by the first Ptolemy. At first the priests opposed the introduction of Serapis. But the liberality of the Ptolemies overcame the resistance of the priests; they submitted to worship Serapis, to whom they gave the throne and the wife of Osiris. This catholicity of worship was further combined with the spread of learning. The same monarchs who favoured the worship of Serapis founded and embellished the Museum and Library; and part of the library was deposited in the Serapeum. The new faith and the new literature led to a coalition of opinions; and the Ægyptian Jews imbibed a portion of the spirit which prevailed around them. Its first development appeared in the Greek version of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint. The day on which the Greek text of the law was introduced into the synagogue at Alexandria, was thus marked in the Palestine calendar: "The law in Greek! Darkness! Three days' fast!" So different already had the Alexandrine Jews become from the Jews in Palestine.

But the difference increased. The necessity for relinquishing the literal meaning of the Mosaic law now led to a new movement, when the Jews at Alexandria could read that law in Greek and meditate on its im-

port. Aristobulus, a learned Jew who flourished there about B.C. 160, wrote an allegorical exposition of the Pentateuch. A fragment of this work has been preserved, and contains several Orphic quotations which had been already moulded into a Jewish form. The attempt thus made to connect the most ancient Hellenic traditions with the *Law* was often repeated afterwards; for we invariably find that when the allegorical principle of interpretation has been adopted by human imagination, the whimsical applications of that principle cease to be controlled by reason. Aristobulus also endeavoured to show that the Pentateuch was the real source of the Aristotelian philosophy. This proposition was thoroughly congenial to the Alexandrine character; and henceforth it was the chief object of Jewish speculation in that city, to trace the subtle analogies which were supposed to exist between the writings attributed to Moses and the teaching of the Grecian schools.

But the literary school of Alexandria was purely critical and not in the least creative. The schoolmen there laboured to collect, revise, and classify the records of the past. Poets trusted to their learning, like Virgil, rather than to their imagination. Language became a study. The legends of ancient mythology were transformed into mysteries. And writers who happened to agree accidentally concerning a few unimportant matters were accused of borrowing from each other—those supposed to be the less ancient from those supposed to be more so. The Alexandrine Jews took an active part in these new studies. The caution against writing (see Dr William Smith's "New Testament History," p. 120), which became a settled law in Palestine, did not find any favour in Ægypt. Numerous authors adapted the history of the Patriarchs, of Moses, and of the kings to classical models. A poem, which bears the name of Phocylides, gives in verse various precepts of Leviticus; and several fragments of a *tragedy*, in

which one Ezekiel, who flourished about B.C. 110, dramatized the Exodus, have been preserved by Eusebius (see Dr William Smith's "New Testament History," pp. 117-120). According to Gibbon (*Dec. and Fall*, ch. xxi.), it was at this time that "the Wisdom of Solomon" was written; a book which still holds its place in the Septuagint. Here we see that tendency of the human mind, to attribute modern writings to ancient authors; a tendency developed conspicuously in both Jewish and Grecian literature.

#### ANCIENT LITERARY MORALITY.

Only a section can be devoted here to a subject that requires a volume for its full elucidation, namely, the propensity among the Greeks and Jews to attribute modern writings to ancient authors.

Dr Wm. Smith (*Greece*, p. 137) informs us that Pythagoras did not leave behind him anything in writing, and the later doctrines and works of the Pythagoreans were attributed by their authors to the founders of the school. Strauss (*New Life of Jesus*, i., 148) informs us that "the Neopythagorean biographer of Pythagoras eulogises the authors for having renounced the fame that was their own and attributed their works to the master of the school." In the present day this voluntary humility would be considered a forgery, and be execrated by the voice of the public.

"There were in antiquity (Smith's *Greece*, p. 127) two large collections of epic poetry. The one comprised poems relating to the great events and enterprises of the Heroic age, and characterised by a certain poetical unity; the other included works tamer in character and more desultory in their mode of treatment, containing the genealogies of men and gods, narratives of the exploits of separate heroes, and descriptions of the ordinary pursuits of life. The poems of the former class passed under the name of



*Homer*, while those of the latter were in the same general way ascribed to *Hesiod*." The fact seems to be that these names, *Homer* and *Hesiod*, had become popular in their respective departments, and modern writers assumed these names in order to render their writings popular.

So lately as A.D. 1831, an anonymous writer published "The New History of the Trojan Wars, and Troy's Destruction." It commences with an account of Hercules, and ends with an account of Brute's doings in Britain.

In his "Commentary on the Old Testament," Dr Kalisch has shown that the Pentateuch is a work written between the eighth and fourth centuries before our era,\* and yet how very freely the writers used the name of *Moses*, who is supposed to have flourished about B.C. 1550.

A glance at the table of contents in the Apocryphal New Testament, referring to "The Epistles of Jesus and Abgarus," the gospels of "James," of "Thomas," of "Matthew," of "Nicodemus," &c., will show how freely the names of the Founder of Christianity, and of those supposed to be connected with him, were used by the early Christian writers.

Paul's supposed epistle to the Galatians is written in Greek; yet it is remarkable (Dr Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, article *Galatians*) that "we have the testimony of Hieronymus, who visited Galatia in the fourth century of our era, in his preface to his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, that the Galli still kept their own language, which was almost the same as the language of the Treviri, or the people of Treves, and Hieronymus, who was a good linguist, and had lived at Treves, was a competent judge of this."

\* The writer of this tract has reason to believe that Dr Kalisch concedes to our Pentateuch an attribute of antiquity far more than it really deserves; but even that conceded by Dr Kalisch is sufficient for the object of this tract.

A Christian, in the second century of our era, wrote a legend about Paul and Thecla; he was convicted of the forgery on his own confession. But he added that he had done what he did through love of Paul, whereupon the Church pardoned him, continued to use his work, and celebrated a festival to these saints. (See the story of Paul and Thecla in the Apocryphal New Testament, and the notes, &c., thereon; also see Strauss, *New Life of Jesus*, vol. i., p. 141-149.) Here we perceive that the early Christians could consider forgery praiseworthy!

A heretical bishop, Faustus, who died about A.D. 384, made a statement, which has been preserved in the works of St Augustine, and quoted by Dr Nathaniel Lardner (*"Credibility,"* iii., 517) thus: "I put in the margin another passage of Faustus, without translating it exactly, where he pretends there are many differences and contrarieties in the Gospels, and that the ancestors of the Catholics had inserted many things, mingling their own words with the oracles of the Lord, which did not agree with the doctrine taught by him; and that the Gospels were not written by Christ, nor his apostles, but a long time after them by some unknown men, half Jews, who were not well informed, but put down any uncertain traditions which they met with, and then affixed to their own erroneous accounts the names of Christ's apostles, or their companions."\*

Morality is a growth, like mathematics or any other science. The self-same principle which authorised the ascription of false authorship to writings justified the arbitrary alteration of texts. A glance at Griesbach's

\* It must be repeated that it is beyond the scope of this tract to give an adequate account of ancient literary forgeries. Let it be sufficient to state that among both Jews and Greeks, writers attributed spurious works to Orpheus, Linus, Moses, Solomon, David, Joshua, Samuel, Phalaris, Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, Plato, Demosthenes, Anacreon, Simonides, Theocritus, and to several other names that at one time were famous.



edition of our New Testament will show how plentifully alterations of the text were introduced by copyists and others. It is probable, from the context and from the whole scope of our fourth gospel, that the two first sentences stood originally thus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." The paralogy that the Word was the same God with whom the Word was, and the repetition that "the same was in the beginning with God," seem to have been doctrinal additions of a later date than the original composition of the gospel. Yet modern as the passage is, it is older than the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine which makes the Holy Spirit a deity is not anywhere to be found in our New Testament. That doctrine rests on the authority of the Council of Constantinople, held A.D. 381.

It should be borne in mind that the oldest extant manuscripts of our New Testament give the text only as it stood in the fourth century of our era. It would naturally be a text of gradual and probably slow formation. For some time many of the books in our New Testament would be mere private property. The owners were subject to the disturbing influence of living tradition. We know from Origen ("Against Celsus," book ii., p. 77) that Celsus complained that the Christians of his day, A.D. 160, were perpetually altering and correcting their gospels. Having regard to the literary morality of the time, it is probable that the owners would alter, increase, diminish, and revise their manuscripts.

From ascribing modern writings to ancient Christian teachers, and altering the writings of other Christians, it was a very easy transition to alter the works of heathen writers, and, like the thief at the crucifixion, make them testify to the divine origin of Christianity.

## PLINY, JOSEPHUS, SUETONIUS, AND TACITUS.

All Jewish and heathen writers who flourished during the first seventy years of our first century are completely silent on the existence of the Christian Church, and they appear utterly ignorant of the miracles, doctrines, persons, and events related in the narratives both of the now rejected and the received gospels.

Gibbon does not exaggerate in the least when he says ("Decline and Fall," ch. xv.), "During the age of Christ, of his apostles and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe. A distinct chapter of Pliny is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature, and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describ-

ing the singular defect of light which followed the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest part of a year, the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendour.\* This season of obscurity, which cannot surely be compared with the preternatural darkness of the Passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets and historians of that memorable age."

The writer of our Odyssey (xx. 355-7) has described an eclipse of the sun, which occurred on the day that witnessed the destruction of the suitors. He says, "The forecourt is full, and the hall also is full of ghosts on their way to Erebus to hide themselves in gloom; and the sun has vanished from the sky, and a dismal murkiness has suddenly come over us."

Here there are accounts of a superhuman event, alleged to have occurred on three momentous occasions, namely, the sun was for a time extinguished, and ghosts were seen. The last in the above order, but first in order of time is confessedly a myth. The next in order of time was once regarded as history. While the last in order of time is believed by all Christendom to be inspired history. The sole grounds for this last belief are certain supposed events of a supernatural character, of which the last-mentioned eclipse of the sun is one. But, if the earliest account of the three eclipses be a myth—and all Christendom will allow it to be a myth—how can the same story be true, merely because it carries the names of writers supposed to have been incapable of error? The eclipse celebrated by the Latin poets may well have been copied from our Odyssey. And equally easy it would be, in the reign of Tiberius, to repeat a story told regarding the death of Julius Cæsar.

Justin Martyr, who flourished about A.D. 150, Theophilus, A.D. 168, Athenagoras, A.D. 171, and Tatian, A.D. 172, are the earliest "apologists," or *defenders* of Christianity. They do not quote, as evidence for the

\* Virgil, *Georgics*, i., 468, &c., *Nicodemus* viii. 1-4, and *Matthew* xxvii. 52, add *ghosts*.

existence of Christianity, from any Jewish or heathen writer, now extant, who was a contemporary of the period from A.D. 1 to A.D. 70, although they would have seized eagerly on any such evidence if any such then existed.

Tertullian, who flourished about A.D. 195, is the first apologist who quotes a heathen writer as evidence for the historical existence of Christianity during our first century. Unfortunately, the writer he quotes could not have written the document quoted from until our first century had expired. Pliny the younger was proconsul of Bithynia, about A.D. 110. Tertullian appeals to a letter on the subject of the Christians, supposed to have been written from that province by Pliny to the emperor Trajan. A German critic and divine, John S. Semler, considers this letter to have been a fabrication of Tertullian, and this opinion is borne out by the scope of the letter.

In that letter Pliny expresses a wish to be favoured with the guidance and orders of Trajan. "Having never been present at any trials concerning those persons who are Christians, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them." After expressing some minor doubts, Pliny says (or is made to say), "In the meanwhile the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I interrogated them whether they were Christians: if they confessed I repeated the question twice, adding threats at the same time; and if they still persevered I ordered them to be executed immediately." Here we have a strange piece of conduct. A number of Christians were brought before Pliny, who, being "unacquainted with the measure of their punishment," put to death those who would not relinquish the profession of Christianity; and he then writes to Trajan for guidance and directions when the martyrs had been put to

death! Such a piece of conduct as this is utterly at variance with all we know concerning Trajan and Pliny. The Romans did *not* put people to death on account of their religion. Every religion was tolerated at Rome. In short, the whole story is improbable, and unsupported by any other evidence. The rest of the epistle is little more than a Christian's representation of his own creed, as he would have it looked upon by others, coupled with a Christian's representation of causeless persecution, even to death, instituted for suppression of his faith, which faith, even at that early day, he pretends empties the heathen temples. A statement forming a strong contrast to the lamentations of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, who, in the middle of the third century, complain that the extensive diocese of Neo Cæsarea contained only seventeen Christians!

Eusebius, who flourished about A.D. 315, is the next Christian writer who quotes external evidence regarding the Christians. He quotes from a passage in Josephus' *Antiquities* (book xviii., ch. 3, § 3), where Josephus is made to say, "At this time there existed Jesus, a wise man, if it be allowed to call him a man, for he performed wonderful works, and instructed those who received the truth with joy; he thus drew to himself many Jews and many Greeks; *he was Christ*; Pilate having punished him with crucifixion on the accusation of our leading men, those who had loved him before still remained faithful to him; for on the third day he appeared unto them, living anew; just as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct even at the present day." This is a translation of the whole passage. It has not the least connection with what precedes or follows. It was unknown to all the previous defenders of Christianity. Josephus was a Jew, and ever remained such. It is quite contrary to the Jewish creed to say that Christ has appeared on earth.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of their nation are to them standing proofs that Christ, their restorer and triumphant deliverer, never can have come. Consequently, it is impossible that Josephus wrote this passage.\*

There is a curious passage regarding the Christians in Suetonius, *Nero*, 16. The writer says that Nero devised a new style of building in the city, and that he designed to extend the city walls as far as Ostia; and then he says, "many severe regulations and new orders were made in his time. A sumptuary law [to check expense in banquets] was enacted. Public suppers were limited to the sportulae; and victualling-houses were restrained from selling any dressed victuals, except pulse and herbs, whereas before they sold all kinds of meat. He likewise inflicted punishments on the Christians, a sort of people who held a new and mischievous superstition. He forbade the revels of the charioteers, who had long assumed a license to stroll about, and established for themselves a kind of prescriptive right to cheat and thief, making a jest of it. The partisans of the rival theatrical performers were banished, as well as the actors themselves."

After relating the conflagration which consumed a considerable part of the city of Rome in the reign of Nero, and that a report had broken out among the populace that Nero had ordered the conflagration (*Annals*, xv. 44), Tacitus says, "Hence to suppress the rumour, he falsely charged with guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. The founder of that name, one Christus, was put to death

\* The Rev. Charles Merivale, in his "Romans under the Empire," vol. vi., 536, says that Josephus "makes no more allusion to the false Christs than to the true Christ. The subject of the Messiah was one he shrank from." Can Mr Merivale prove that Josephus was acquainted with "the subject of the Messiah?"



as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius; but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged."

It is scarcely necessary to point out the exceedingly abrupt notice of the Christians in the passage attributed to Suetonius, where the profession of Christianity and expense in banquets and other public amusements are huddled together in one and the same paragraph. "The passage in Tacitus, had it been genuine, would not have been overlooked by all the early Christian writers in their various disputations with objectors, and especially by Tertullian, who quoted largely from his works; and the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, who was zealous in his defence of the faith and greedy of materials with which to support it."\* A similar observation applies to Suetonius. If his brief and sterile notice of the Christians had existed in the days of the early apologists, or even in the days of Tertullian and Eusebius, it is inconceivable that, when they had scarcely anything in the shape of external evidence to their purpose, they would have rejected or overlooked that passage.

These four spurious passages, *now* found in Pliny the younger, Josephus, Suetonius, and Tacitus, but unknown to the primitive Christian apologists, are the only testimonies to the existence of Christianity during even the latter part of our first century, borne by Jewish or heathen writers who flourished in or near to the first century of the Christian era. Our New Testament does not supply this want of evidence. Neither do the writings of the so-called Apostolical Fathers, nor the extant apocryphal New Testament literature. No

\* See "The Bible: Is it the Word of God?" by Mr Strange, p. 352.

doubt some writers have supposed that our New Testament was written during our first century. But of this there is not any proof. We have not any unmistakable quotations from our gospels until rather late in the second century. The earliest citation is from our first gospel by Justin Martyr, about A.D. 142; while our fourth gospel is not quoted from until the time of Irenæus, about A.D. 178. Both Mosheim (*Ecclesiastical History, century i. part ii. § 16*) and Strauss ("Life of Jesus," *Introduction, 13*) agree that there is not any reliable trace of our New Testament until about the middle of the second century. The extant apocryphal New Testament literature is almost universally admitted to be a production of the second century. No writer has maintained that the so-called Apostolical Fathers existed during any part of our first century, except, perhaps, Clement the Roman. And since the publication, 1853, of Hilgenfeld's "Apostolical Fathers," the best authorities consider that the authenticity of the writings attributed to them is more than doubtful.

Mr Neale, in his tract on "The Mythical Element in Christianity," does not attempt to show that any contemporaries of the supposed Jesus of our New Testament, or of the supposed events mentioned in its narratives, extending over the period from A.D. 1 to A.D. 63, have taken notice of him or of those events. Mr Neale tries to prove that the above three passages at present found in Pliny, Suetonius, and Tacitus are genuine. None of these writers were contemporary with the Jesus and the events mentioned in our New Testament narratives. Mr Neale admits that the passage in Pliny, as well as the whole tenth book of Pliny's Epistles, was not published until after his death; a circumstance which gave an easy access to fraud; he does not show when the passage in Suetonius was first quoted; and he admits that the passage in Tacitus was not even referred to until the fourth century, if even then referred to. While, on the other



hand, the above indicated internal marks of forgery have never yet been explained; yet Mr Neale does not appear to have perceived them.

If the foregoing statements be correct, it follows (i.) That we have not any contemporary evidence for the existence of Christianity during the first seventy years of our first century; and (ii.) That the silence of both the Jews and the heathens during the first seventy years of our first century cannot be accounted for except by the hypothesis that Christianity did not exist during that period.

#### THE SEPTUAGINT.

Since the Jews of Alexandria knew little or nothing of the Hebrew language, they naturally desired to have a Greek version of the entire Old Testament. This want was the cause of the Septuagint version: so called from an improbable and now discredited story, that the version was made by seventy-two Jews, employed and paid liberally for that purpose by Ptolemy Philadelphus, who reigned over Ægypt B.C. 285-247. But the truth is, that the numbers and names of the translators who compiled the Septuagint, and the times at which different portions were translated are all uncertain. It may, however, be stated confidently that the Septuagint version was made at Alexandria. That it was begun in the time of the elder Ptolemies, about B.C. 280. And that only the Pentateuch, or Law, was translated at first.

From the time when the Septuagint was completed there were two canons of the Old Testament, which may be denominated respectively the Hebrew canon and the Ægyptian canon. The former ended with the prophecies of Malachi, and the latter with the second book of Maccabees. During a long period the Christian church used both canons. At the Council of Trent, A.D. 1546, the Church of Rome sanctioned the

Ægyptian canon. The Protestant churches have never had the means of assembling an œcumenical council, although for their own purposes they agree in calling certain councils *œcumenical*, and defer to their authority. They have adopted silently the Hebrew canon.

Two remarkable characteristics co-exist in the Septuagint, namely, (1.) It cannot have been made from the extant Hebrew text ; and (2.) The canon recognised by the translators was one which had not been closed until a much later period than the close of the present Hebrew canon.

In the book of Job, contained in the Hebrew canon, there is a well known passage (xix. 25-27), supposed to refer to the Christian's "Redeemer;" but in the Septuagint the meaning of that passage is:—"I know that he is eternal who is about to deliver me, and to raise up upon the earth my skin that endures these sufferings : for these things have been accomplished to me of the Lord ; which I am conscious of in myself, which mine eye has seen, and not another, but all have been fulfilled to me in my bosom." Again, a well known passage in Isaiah (xlii. 1), which the writer of our first gospel (xii. 18) refers to Jesus, stands in the Septuagint thus : "Jacob is my servant, I will help him : Israel is my chosen one, my soul has accepted him." Again, in the book of Deuteronomy contained in the Septuagint, there is a well known passage (xxxii. 43), "let all the angels of God worship him." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 6) refers this passage to Jesus. But the book of Deuteronomy, in the Hebrew canon, omits this passage altogether. These are merely specimens of the numerous differences between the books of the extant Hebrew canon and the Septuagint version ; differences which prove that the extant Hebrew canon was not that from which the Septuagint version was made.

But, not only does the Septuagint text differ from the Hebrew, the canon of the Septuagint contains four-

teen books, "The Apocrypha" so-called, which are not in the Hebrew canon. Of these three are very remarkable, namely, "The Wisdom of Solomon," "The first book of Maccabees," and "The second book of Esdras."

#### THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON.

I. "One hundred years before the birth of Christ, a philosophical treatise, which manifestly betrays the style and sentiments of the school of Plato, was produced by the Alexandrine Jews, and unanimously received as a genuine and valuable relic of the inspired wisdom of Solomon."—*Decline and Fall*, ch. xxi. This treatise contains the earliest extant instance where the Greek word *logos*, in the sense of "the power of the mind manifested in speech," is personified and associated with Jehovah.

It is a mistake to suppose that Plato has used the word *logos* in this sense in connection with the Supreme Being. Dr William Smith, *History of Greece*, p. 136, speaking of Anaxagoras, says, "He abandoned the system of his predecessors, and instead of regarding some elementary form of matter as the origin of all things, he conceived a supreme mind or intelligence, *nous*, distinct from the visible world, to have imparted form and order to the chaos of nature." And regarding Plato, he says, p. 594, "The fundamental principle of Plato's philosophy is the belief in an eternal and self-existent cause, the origin of all things. From this divine being emanate not only the souls of men, which are also immortal, but that of the universe itself, which is supposed to be animated by a divine spirit." Plato (*Philebus*, p. 30, 31) says, "There is in the universe, a cause, not inconsiderable, which puts into order and arranges the years, and seasons, and months,—a cause which may most justly be called Wisdom and Mind (*sophia* and *nous*). Wisdom, however, and Mind could

not exist without soul (*psuche*). Therefore, in the nature of Zeus there is a kingly soul and a kingly mind, through its influence as the cause . . . . Mind (*nous*) is ever the ruler of the universe."

Plato (*Gorgias*, p. 523, A) says, "As Homer says, then, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades divided the government among themselves, after they had received it from their father. This law, then, respecting men was in existence in the time of Kronos, and always was, and still is established among the gods, that a man who has passed through life justly and piously when he dies should go to the isles of the blessed, and dwell in all perfect happiness free from evil, but that he who has lived unjustly and impiously should go to a prison of punishment and justice, which they call Tartarus."

The passage above alluded to as being written by "Homer" occurs in *Iliad*, xv. 187-193, where Poseidon says, "we are three brothers from Kronos, whom Rhea brought forth: Zeus and I, and Hades governing those beneath the Earth, the third; all things were divided into three parts, and each was allotted his dignity. The lots being shaken, to me in the first place was allotted to dwell for ever in the hoary sea, and Hades next obtained the pitchy darkness; but Zeus in the third place had allotted to him the wide heaven in the air and in the clouds. Nevertheless the Earth is still the common property of all, and lofty Olympus."

In a note on this passage Mr Paley says, "The triple division here alluded to is said to have been the *Τριάς* or Trinity of the Platonists and Neoplatonists."

Writing, as before mentioned, about B.C. 100, the writer of "The Wisdom of Solomon," according to the literary morality of his age, having attributed his work to the Jewish king who is supposed to have lived about nine centuries previously, and addressing the Deity concerning the destruction of the first-born among the *Ægyptians* in the time of Moses, says, xviii. 14-16, "While all things were in quiet silence, and that night

was in the midst of her swift course, thine almighty Word (*ho pantodunamos sou logos*) leaped down from heaven out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction, and brought thine unfeigned commandment as a sharp sword, and standing up, filled all things with death; and it touched the heaven, but it stood upon the Earth."

With these suggestive passages before him, Philo, who flourished B.C. 42, without the aid of inspiration, appears to have developed the theory of the *logos* or "Word," which ultimately expanded into the Christian Trinity, "that malignant riddle!"

Philo-Judæus says ("On the Migration of Abraham," § i.): "You must not wonder that Moses has called speech in man the abode of the mind; for he also says that the mind of the universe, that is to say, the Deity, has for his abode his own word (*logos*) . . . the Word which is more ancient than all the things which were the objects of creation, and by means of which it is that the Ruler of the universe, taking hold of it as a rudder, governs all things. And when he was fashioning the world, he used this as an instrument for the blameless arrangement of all the things which he was completing."

Philo regarded matter as the source of imperfection and evil. Hence he could not conceive the absolutely perfect Deity coming in direct contact with the material creation. Hence Philo made a distinction between the Creator and the mere fashioner of the material universe, and he carried out this distinction by representing the existence of an intermediate former of the universe, namely, the *logos*, or word of the Deity.

This idea of the inherent imperfection of matter was afterwards a characteristic of Gnosticism, which, according to Dr Wm. Smith, "N. T. History," 339, 551, was taught by Simon Magus and Hymenæus. One of the chief objects of the Gnostic philosophy was to reconcile the existence of this evil with the perfections of the Deity. Philo achieved this object by means of one



intermediate principle. The Gnostics accomplished their object by attributing the formation of matter to a number of inferior principles emanating from the Supreme Being. They filled the interval between the highest heaven, the abode of the Deity, and Earth, the seat of matter, with Æons, Archons, Kosmocrators, and Spirits of Evil. These, although derived from the Deity, wandered away from Him, and became imperfect in proportion to their distance from Him, until at length some became actually evil (see Mosheim's "Institutes," century ii., part ii., ch. v., § 11; also "The Jesus of History," p. 388-90). This idea is embodied in the Epistle to the Ephesians, ii. 13, 17, where the writer tells the Ephesians, "Ye who were *far off* are made nigh," and that Jesus "preached peace to you who were *afar off*" (*makràn*).

The writer of "The Jesus of History" has pointed out the influence which the schools of Philo and of the Gnostics exercised on the writers of some of the Pauline epistles, and of our fourth gospel. (See bk. iii., ch. 2.) According to what we find in Ephesians iii., vi., Philippians ii., Colossians i., ii., Jesus Christ, as the highest created power, was above the Gnostic Æons and Archons, &c. He is the medium of approach to the otherwise inaccessible deity. "The church is to shew the manifold wisdom of God to principalities and powers in the heavens (Eph. iii., 10.) The saints (iii., 19) are to understand the length and depth, and breadth and height. All these are terms employed by the Gnostics, and as having each a definite meaning. They formerly (ii., 1, 2) walked according to the ÆON of the world, the Archon of the power of the air. And even now (vi., 12) they wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the cosmocrators of this dark age, against evil spirits in the heavens."

In our fourth gospel, Jesus is not any longer the word of the Deity, or the power of the Deity; he is the Logos, the word, simply. He is not any longer a

slave. The Deity does not raise him from the dead ; his resumption of life is the result of his own power. But, nevertheless (i., 3), "All things were made by him ;" he was only "a god" "with the Deity" (i., 1.) He was, in the words of Philo quoted above, "the Word, by means of which it is that the Ruler of the universe, taking hold of it as a rudder, governs all things."

The writer of "The Jesus of History" says (p. 424-6),—"Much of the phraseology employed by Paul, and by the author of the fourth gospel, upon which modern orthodox deductions are based, was, as we have seen, borrowed from a peculiar philosophy. And the object of that philosophy was not to exalt the attributes, or manifestations, of persons to which this phraseology was applied, but to remove the God whom it recognised from all relation to matter, either as its origin or its ruler. The functions exercised by the Word or wisdom of God were functions which thinkers of that school of philosophy deemed it derogatory to ascribe to God himself. They implied relation and imperfection, and therefore could not belong to the one absolute and perfect Being. The creation of the world, for instance, which, to modern theologians, is a conclusive proof of the absolute divinity of Jesus, was originally attributed to the Word of God for precisely the opposite reason. That all things were made by Jesus, as the *Logos* was a mark, not of equality, but of inferiority. And the same was the case even when God was represented as making the worlds by him ; for this, though removing the idea of moral imperfection from one who was performing only the work of the Father, preserved his relative character, and necessarily implied subordination and dependence. There is nothing, indeed, in any of these writings inconsistent with this view. It is true that Jesus, in the fourth gospel, is made to claim oneness with the Father. But the writer himself explains the nature of this union in a way to remove all misconception when he describes Jesus as praying

that his disciples may be one with him, in the same manner that he is one with the Father. And though the Jews are represented as having understood him to claim to be God, yet this is only one of the many misconceptions attributed to them, owing to their taking literally what Jesus had spoken in a figure. And the mistake is immediately corrected by a quotation from their Scriptures, in which the word 'gods' is used figuratively; thus teaching them that it was only in the same sense that the word had been used by Jesus himself. And in all the writings of Paul, high as is the view that he entertains of the nature and office of Jesus, his inferiority to the Father is uniformly preserved. In proportion as the Church, by defining its own creed, separated itself from other societies, the opinions these latter held were first rejected and then forgotten. And the circumstance that the immense majority of Christians belonged to the poor and uneducated classes necessarily gave a preponderance to those teachers whose knowledge and mode of thought were most nearly on a level with the minds of their hearers, and whose doctrines were thus best adapted to their apprehension. And hence there was a tendency to depreciate philosophy, and to proclaim the incompetency of human reason of itself to deal with questions touching the nature of God, or his relation to the world and man, or his purposes with regard to the unbelievers and the faithful. Corresponding with this depreciation of the unaided reason, there was an elevation of the Scripture as the sole and sufficient source of all religious truth, and of the Church as its one infallible interpreter. And, when this point was reached, it was inevitable, under the influence of the prevailing sentiment with regard to Jesus, that the very phrases which, as at first employed, indicated his inferiority, should, when their real meaning was lost, be quoted to prove his equality and even his identity with God."



THE FIRST BOOK OF MACCABEES.

II. Of all the historical books in the Septuagint, none is so thoroughly authentic as the first book of Maccabees. But this book is remarkable in other respects. It relates the war of extermination against the Jews, undertaken by Antiochus Epiphanes, and which called forth a glorious resistance, which ended in establishing the independence of Judea under the Maccabæan or Asmonæan princes; an independence which lasted from B.C. 165 to B.C. 63. It is admitted by the late Dean Alford and others that some of the events recorded in first Maccabees are referred to by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where (xi., 34-38) he alludes to those who "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens," and also to those who "were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection," and those who "were slain with the sword," and "wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

Other writers extend this reference. M. Ferdinand Hitzig, Professor of Exegesis in the University of Zurich, in his "Commentary on the Psalms," 1836, holds that Psalms 1, 2, 74-150 were composed during the Maccabæan period of Jewish history.

Dr Wm. Smith ("New Testament History," p. 38), says, "It has been commonly supposed that the Psalter contains compositions of the Maccabæan date." This supposition is strongly borne out by the internal evidence to it contained in the second, seventy-fourth, seventy-ninth, and one-hundred-and-tenth Psalms, which clearly refer to some person who was both a successful general and the *anointed* high priest and governor of the Jews, which no Jew ever was prior to the time of Judas Maccabæus. And we are informed expressly (1 *Maccabees* iv. 24), that it was on the occasion when Judas gained a victory over Antiochus' general, Gorgias, that the psalm was sung which stands

numbered one hundred and thirty-six in our collection : "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good ; for his mercy endureth for ever."

Moreover, we are told, 1 Maccabees, i. 56, that, during the war of extermination, the soldiers of Antiochus, "when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burned them with fire." And, when Judas had repulsed the armies of Antiochus, and had turned the frustrated war of extermination into a successful war for independence, we are told, 2 Maccabees, ii. 14, that "Judas gathered together all those things that were lost by reason of the war we had, and they remain with us."

From these statements it is very probable that Judas Maccabæus, either in person or by deputy, was the editor of the extant Hebrew canon ; and as he perished in battle, B.C. 161, that canon cannot be much older than that date.

But here a question arises, namely, By what means did Judas "gather together" the materials for his work of compilation ? Of this circumstance we have not any account. Can it be that Judas compiled the extant Hebrew canon from the septuagint version ? At all events, there has not yet been found any inscription, in the Hebrew square character, of earlier date than the time of Judas.

#### THE SECOND BOOK OF ESDRAS.

III. But by far the most remarkable of the so-called apocryphal books, once contained in the Septuagint, is the book known in our "Authorised Version" as *The Second Book of Esdras*. It is not now comprised in the extant Septuagint ; but it must once have been ; because it exists in the Latin version, or *Vulgate*, and because Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* iii. 16, § 100, quotes the book as the work of "the prophet Ezra."

Much disputation has taken place regarding the date of this book. Some place it in the time of Julius

Cæsar, who perished, B.C. 44, while others assign the book to the time of Domitian, who perished A.D. 96.

So far as regards the argument contained in this tract, all the dates attributed to the second book of Esdras, between B.C. 44 and A.D. 96, are equally unimportant. But the doctrines set forth in it are very remarkable. As in the received New Testament, so in Second Esdras, anticipations of happiness, viii. 52-55, &c., are clouded by forebodings, xiv. 10, of the world's senility. Over and over again, vii. 70, viii. i, 3, &c., &c., we are told that blessedness is reserved for only "very few." After predicting miseries, the writer tells us (vii. 26-35) that "the bride shall appear," and "my son *Jesus* shall be revealed with those that be with him, and they that remain shall rejoice with him four hundred years. After these years shall my son, Christ, die, and all men that have life. And the world shall be turned into the old silence seven days. . . . and after seven days the world . . . shall be raised . . . and the earth shall restore those that are asleep . . . and the Most High shall appear upon the seat of judgment, and misery shall pass away," &c., &c. But these predictions are followed by the gloomy consideration that the passing away of misery shall be enjoyed only by a few, ix. 7, 8: "Every one that shall be saved, and shall be able to escape by his works, and by faith, whereby ye have believed, shall be preserved from the said perils, and shall see my salvation in my land, and within my borders; for I have sanctified them for me from the beginning."\* Adam is reproached, vii. 48, &c.: "O thou Adam, what hast thou done? for though it was thou that sinned, thou art not fallen alone, but we all that come of thee!" In short, all the Pauline and other New Testament doctrines are set forth in the second book of Esdras, except the doctrine of atone-

\* Observe that here we have the discordant doctrines of justification by works and justification by faith, afterwards developed by James, ii. 24, and Paul, *Romans* iii. 28.

ment by the human sacrifice of Jesus. That doctrine was taught by the author of *Daniel*, who wrote during the war of extermination, B.C. 168 to 164. He says, ix, 26, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." So that, in the middle of our second century, when the compilers of our New Testament took in hand the formation of a New Testament canon, they had all the doctrines therein contained ready made for them in the edition of the Septuagint then extant. This fact, therefore, cuts away completely the ground under the feet of those who assert that the compilers of our New Testament wrote under the influence of divine inspiration; for there is not any necessity to require the intervention of Divine Providence to account for a number of men having written doctrines which, as we have seen, had been already conceived and committed to writing.

#### EARLY CHRISTIAN METHOD OF EXPLAINING THE OLD TESTAMENT, AND COMPILING THE NEW TESTAMENT.

So early in the history of the Christian Church at the period of its maturity as the time of Clemens Alexandrinus, A.D. 200, it was found impossible, from our four gospels, to determine exactly the number of years during which Jesus exercised his ministry before his crucifixion. Recourse was therefore had to our Old Testament for a solution of the difficulty. Isaiah, in a well known passage (lxi. 2) states that Jehovah had anointed him, amongst other things, "to proclaim the acceptable *year* of the Lord." Although Jesus never was anointed, yet the writer of our third gospel (iv. 18, 19) makes him quote that passage, and apply it to himself. So the word "year" in that passage was held by Clement, *Strom.*, 1, and Origen, *Prin.*, 4, 5, as an authoritative and satisfactory solution of the difficulty: that Jesus' ministry lasted only one year. Such a method of ascertaining a historical fact in the narratives

of our New Testament is characteristic, not only of the early fathers, but also of the writers who compiled our four gospels. While each of these four writers gives us an account of Jesus very different from the other three, yet, when relating an incident in the life of Jesus, they all try to show, by allegory or otherwise, that the incident in question was either predicted or lay enveloped in some prophecy, some story, or even some ceremonial law contained in our Old Testament. Thus, speaking of the Jewish nation, Isaiah (liii. 4) said, "surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." The writer of our first gospel (viii. 16, 17) says, "when the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses;" as if Jesus absorbed into his own person the physical maladies of those whom he cured! Again, Isaiah xi. 1, says that "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch (*netser*) shall grow out of its roots:" that is the Messiah shall be a *netser* of the house of Jesse. So, the writer of our first gospel (ii. 23) says that Joseph, accompanied by Jesus and his mother, "came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." Here the Hebrew word *netser* for the appellative noun *branch* was taken as the type of the town Nazareth!\* This combination is preposterous in the extreme; but the passage also contains incidentally a curious indication that the writer of our first Gospel was not an inhabitant of Palestine. He says that Joseph "dwelt in a city called Nazareth;" plainly indicating that neither the writer nor his readers knew Palestine except at second hand; for an inhabitant of the country would not write in such a vague manner. Let the reader

\* See Kalisch on *Leviticus*, vol. i. 148.



imagine an inhabitant of England stating that the subject of his memoir "dwelt in a city called Chester." Again, the writer of Exodus (xii. 46) when giving directions regarding the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, says, "neither shall ye break a bone thereof." So, the writer of our fourth gospel says that when the soldiers came to Jesus, on the cross, and saw he was dead already, "they brake not his legs," and adds (xix. 36) that "these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken." So that a ceremonial law, according to this writer, was a type of Jesus!

Such fantastical adaptations of passages in the Old Testament to incidents in the life of Jesus were sure to create obscurities and contradictions in the histories of him. Each of our evangelists describes Jesus from a particular point of view, and none of them endeavour to give us a complete account of his whole life. Yet we have New Testament writings of various kinds giving accounts, not only of his whole life, but also of what he did when he descended into Hades: an event which is alluded to more than once in our New Testament. Still this want of an intelligible, connected, and complete history of Jesus is a source of incurable uncertainty to any one who attempts to write his life. There is not any extant model of him with which we can compare the improbable and jarring incidents related concerning him. Moreover, our *four* gospels, relating almost exclusively to the short period of his ministry,—“the acceptable year of the Lord,”—give only a very imperfect account of him. It is remarkable that none of our evangelists, nor the so-called apocryphal evangelists attempt to describe Jesus. They do not appear ever to have seen him. To our evangelists Jesus was a “mystery,” “a hope,” “a wandering voice,”—

“Still longed for, never seen!”

In the present day, therefore, all that can be done is

to "gather together," like Judas Maccabæus, the principal incidents in the life of Jesus, according as they are related in the various extant New Testament writings. It will be seen that the *incidents* in all those writings are equally improbable.

A COMPLETE LIFE OF JESUS.

Jesus, a Jewish carpenter, (Mark vi. 3), was born (Luke iii. 23) about Olympiad 195, 1. His father, Joseph, (*Prot-evangeleon* viii. 8), was also a carpenter of Nazareth in Galilee. Being warned by an angel, Joseph fled with Jesus and his mother Mary to Egypt, where (*Infancy*, iv. 3, 6, 13, 22) on their entrance the idols of Egypt fell down. When returning to Judea the family fell among robbers, of whom the chief were Titus and Dimachus. The former wished to let the family pass unmolested; but the latter objected, whereupon (viii. 6, 7,) Jesus prophesied that at the end of thirty years he and the two thieves would be crucified, and that the thief, Titus, should go before him into Paradise. St Bartholomew, (xi.), when a child and sick, was cured miraculously by being laid on Jesus' bed. Judas Iscariot, (xiv.), when a boy, being possessed by Satan and brought into the presence of Jesus to be cured, tried to bite Jesus, and, because he failed, he struck Jesus on the right side, and in the same moment Satan went out of Judas, and ran away like a mad dog. The same side of Jesus which had been struck the Jews pierced with a spear. By means of miracles (xvi.) Jesus aided his father, Joseph, at his carpenter's work. Simon, the Canaanite, (xviii.), when a boy, and bitten by a serpent, was cured miraculously by Jesus. Joseph (xix.) having sent his son James to gather wood, the latter was bitten by a venomous viper, but was cured miraculously by Jesus. Also (xx.) Jesus being sent to school to one Zaccheus, so astonished the master that he told Joseph that Jesus was more learned than any master.

So Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to another master who, when Jesus refused to name the letters proceeded to flog him ; but as soon as the master raised his hand it withered, and he died. When Jesus was twelve years old (xxi.) his parents brought him to Jerusalem to the passover, and when the feast was over they returned ; but Jesus continued behind in the temple among the doctors, and elders, and learned men of Israel, to whom he proposed several questions, and also gave answers. He quoted our one hundred and tenth psalm to prove that the Messiah was the lord of David ; \* he explained to them the books of the law,

\* This Psalm, cx., has misled not only the writer of "The Infancy," but also Matthew, xxii. 44, Mark xiii. 36, Luke xx. 42, and the writers of Acts ii. 34, and Hebrews i. 13. Yet, when examined with care and skill, it can be shown to be a psalm singularly inapplicable to David : neither written by him, nor addressed to him.

I. For Melchisedec was not a Jew, and consequently neither David nor any other Jew could be a priest according to the order of Melchisedec, but only according to the order of Aaron.

II. The oath of Jehovah (verse 4) shews that the priesthood in question had been denied, and must be asserted by force of arms against hostile kings. What did foreign kings care about the priesthood of David, or of his successors ? What those kings, alluded to in the text of Psalm cx., contended against was the Melchisedecian character of a priest : that is to say his royal dignity. But before the captivity the kings of the Jews were not strictly priests. The case of Uzziah (2 *Chron.* xxvi. 16-21,) is decisive on this point. Moreover, it is a well known fact that the Jewish priests never were kings. The union mentioned in verse 4 first took this form under the Maccabees, who were styled *ethnarchs* or princes, not kings (*basileis*), when Priest Jonathan (1 *Macc.* ix. 30, &c.,) exercised the highest civil power, while at the same time he was high priest. The Maccabees were first priests and afterwards princes ; and to the Maccabees (Philo *De Legatione*, § 26,) the royal power appeared less important than the priestly.

III. Originally the Maccabees were priests, not princes ; and, therefore, the oath in this psalm, making the priest a prince, and a priest according to the order of Melchisedec, exalts the subject by making him a priest-prince.



“and the mysteries which are contained in the books of the prophets—things which the mind of no creature could reach;” he explained all the motions of the heavenly bodies; and he explained the sciences of physics and metaphysics. Jesus having made twelve sparrows of clay on the Sabbath-day (*Thomas i.*) gave them life, and the sparrows flew away. “Another time (*ii. 7-9.*) Jesus went forth into the street, and a boy, running by, rushed upon his shoulder; at which Jesus, being angry, said unto him, Thou shalt go no further, and he immediately fell down dead.”

When he was about thirty years old (*Justin Martyr’s “Dialogue with Trypho,” Luke iii. 21-23.*) “Jesus came to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, and when he went down to the water, a fire was kindled in the Jordan;” and “being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased.”

Shortly after his baptism Jesus entered on his public ministry, the events of which are recorded fully in our four gospels. The only new doctrine he preached was, that he, Jesus, was the Christ who was to save Israel; and he proved the truth of his doctrine by his miraculous exploits, which he is related (*Matthew xi. 5.*) to

IV. In Psalm cviii. the conquest of Gilead and Moab is first mentioned. And the connexion of Psalm cx. with Psalms cviii. and cix. Hitzig considers to be not accidental.

V. Lastly the writer of Psalm cx. has not a full command of the language, as is shown by his unnecessarily repeating the same terms; and the post-Babylonian origin of the psalm is clearly indicated by the words “mishchar” and “yaldutheka,” the latter is first found in Ecclesiastes, and the former is a late formation. The two words (the former in a slightly modified form) are found in Ecclesiastes xi. 10, with which Hitzig considers Psalm cx. to be evidently connected. Once admitted to be posterior to the captivity, the psalm must necessarily belong to the Maccabean period, as it pre-supposes independent Jewish rulers (who were also priests) at Jerusalem.

have enumerated thus : "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." These exploits were supposed to have been predicted by Isaiah (xxxv. 5, 6 ; lxi. 1.)

But after some time, at the instigation of the Jews, the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, crucified Jesus and the two thieves, whom Nicodemus, in his gospel, calls Gestas and Dimas.\* Upon that occasion, "about the sixth hour, darkness was upon the face of the whole earth until the ninth hour. And while the sun was eclipsed, behold the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom ; and the rocks also were rent, and the graves opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama zabacthani, which being interpreted is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? (*Psalm* xxii. 1), And after these things Jesus said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ; † (*Psalm* xxxi. 5), and having said this he gave up the ghost." See *Nicodemus* viii. 1-4 ; *Matthew* xxvii. 46-53 ; *Luke* xxiii. 46.

Being dead and buried, Jesus (*Nicodemus*, xvi., xvii., and xviii.) proceeded to the gates of Hades, whereupon a voice of thunder proclaimed, "Lift up your gates, O ye princes ; and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." (*Psalm*, xxiv., 7, *Septuagint.*) Jesus then entered Hades, delivered Adam, David, and all the ancient patriarchs, saints, and righteous men, and "trampling

\* According to Christians these differences of the thieves' names prove the gospels of the *Infancy* and *Nicodemus* to be spurious ; while the differences in the names of the twelve apostles (*Matthew* x. 3 ; *Mark* iii. 18 ; *Luke* vi. 15 ; *Acts* i. 13,) are not of any consequence !!

† According to our unique fourth gospel (xix. 28,) the last words of Jesus were different from these. But *Nicodemus*, "Matthew," and *Luke*, constitute a majority of three to one against "John !"

on Death, seized the prince of Hades (Beelzebub), and deprived him of all his power," except that Jesus made Satan subject to Beelzebub, "in the room of Adam and his righteous sons."

These events are alluded to in *Ephesians* iv., 8-10, where the writer says, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (*Psalms* lxxviii. 18.) Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." See also 1 *Peter* iii. 19, 20, and 2 *Timothy* i. 10, where Jesus is said to have "abolished death."

After having done all that was necessary in "the lower parts of earth," Jesus rose from the grave on the 8th of April, A.D. 30. (See Dr William Smith's "New Testament History," page 292.) He remained on earth, somewhere or other, for a period of forty days, during which time, according to Nicodemus (x. 23), he shewed himself to his disciples. This agrees with the account in our fourth gospel, while our first gospel (xxvi. 32, xxviii. 10) extends the interviews of Jesus to his brethren. While again (1 *Cor.* xv. 6) Paul extends those interviews to "above five hundred brethren at once!" Of these five hundred there is not any mention made in our gospels, nor do the writers indicate any idea of such a number of brethren. When the forty days were ended (*Luke* xxiv. 33, 36, 42, 43) Jesus stood in the midst of the eleven apostles (Judas Iscariot being dead), and those that were with him at Jerusalem, and "he did eat a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb," and (50) "he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

It should be observed here that the "heaven" of both the ancient Jews and Greeks was a revolving brazen vault rising out of ocean at the horizon, with a trap-door in

it to let its inhabitants down and up again. Thus (*Iliad*, viii. 391-6), speaking of Here and Pallas, the author of our *Iliad* says, "Here with the lash urged on the steeds speedily. The self-opening portals of heaven creaked, which the Hours held in charge, to whom are entrusted the great heaven and Olympus, either to open the dense cloud, or to close it. Then through these they guided their goaded steeds." The reader can compare this passage with *Genesis* xxviii. 17, where Jacob, after dreaming, thought he had found "the gate of heaven."

Jesus, then, having ascended through the aforesaid gate or trap-door into "heaven," the book of *Acts* opens with Peter occupying the chief place among the Apostles. This agrees with our first gospel, xvi. 16-19. In that book, Peter is not supplanted by John, as in our fourth gospel. But before many years (*Acts* xiii-xxviii.), both Peter and John were far outshone by Paul (A.D. 45-63), who became the real author of Christianity as it is held by Unitarians.

Paul was at first a persecutor of the Christians ; but while going to Damascus with a force to seize on some of those sectaries, about A.D. 31, he was surrounded with a supernatural light (*Acts* ix., xxii., and xxvi.), which swallowed the brightness of the noon-day sun, and struck to the earth Paul and his small retinue of armed men. But although the only person among them who was blinded by that light was Paul, yet he was the only person who, amidst that stunning light, beheld the glorified Jesus, and heard him say, "Saul ! Saul ! why persecutest thou Me ?" Paul, although he had never seen or heard Jesus previously, at once recognised him, and asked "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?"

To shorten a long story, related in an utterly conflicting manner in *Acts*, *Galatians*, and *Romans*, Paul now steps into the foreground of this miraculous and mythical history (A.D. 45), and becomes the real fashioner of Christianity into a self-consistent doctrinal

form,—a task not performed by Peter, John, or even Jesus himself. Moreover (*Romans* xv. 19), Paul spread Christianity from Jerusalem, through Asia Minor, through part of Greece, Rome, and Illyricum. “From Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel.” These words are supposed to have been written about A.D. 60. Doubtless, the writer meant that Paul had not only preached the gospel in those places, but that he had preached it successfully; that he had made vast numbers of converts, and had founded thriving churches throughout the wide circuit of his apostolical labours and journeys. And this is confirmed by a statement supposed to have been written by Tacitus (*Annals*, xv. 44), that when Nero persecuted the Christians, A.D. 64, “the confessions of those who were seized discovered a great multitude of their accomplices.” Yet, according to Chrysostom (*Opera*, vii. 658), after Christianity had enjoyed the sunshine of imperial favour more than sixty years (A.D. 370), the Christians in Rome did not exceed a fifth part of its inhabitants! While, according to Basil and Gregory of Nyssa (before mentioned, p. 15), about A.D. 250, the extensive diocese of Neo Cæsarea contained only seventeen believers!

Thirty-nine years elapsed between the supposed imprisonment of Paul at Rome and the termination of our first century. During that period we know literally nothing about the history of the Christian Church, or of the Apostles. It is a period of complete darkness, in the supposed history of the Christian Church. We have not any historical evidence concerning even the existence of the Christian Church until it emerges into light, amidst a whirlwind of controversy, about the time of Justin Martyr, who was put to death about A.D. 165.

Mosheim (*Church History*, century 1, part ii., ch. ii., § 3), says, “Many have undertaken to write the history of the *apostles*,—a history full of fables, doubts, and difficulties.”



## OUR NEW TESTAMENT.

It is quite evident that the writers of our New Testament were neither pure Jews nor heathens. They neither rejected our Old Testament nor received it literally as orthodox Jews would. Those writers were not wholly ignorant of Jewish laws and customs, nor were they well acquainted with them.

In our fourth gospel (i. 29), Jesus is called "the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." But under the dispensation contained in our Old Testament a lamb never was appointed for a sin offering. There was not any such offering except one, namely, the scapegoat, and (Lev. iv. and Num. xv.) that offering atoned only for sins of ignorance. Thus while the Grecian idea of the atoning victim (*hierion*) was that it atoned for every offence, the so-called Mosaic idea was that the victim—and only the scapegoat—atoned only for sins of ignorance (*agnoemata*).

Some writers have endeavoured to refer this *lamb* of the fourth gospel to the "lamb" mentioned in Isaiah liii. 7. But in that passage Jehovah's servant is compared not only to a lamb but also to a *sheep*. There are other passages in that chapter which are very inconsistent with what our New Testament tells us concerning Jesus. He had not any children, and, therefore (verse 10), he could not see his seed. Jesus was put to death when he was about thirty years of age, and, therefore, he could not be said to "prolong his days." Jesus is said to be identical with the God of the Christians. Therefore if (verse 12) "he made intercession for transgressors," the intercession must have been made to some God who is not the God of the Christians; because Jesus could not make intercession to himself.

The fact is, that the whole of that passage does not relate to Jesus but to Israel; and through love of allegory and ignorance of the Pentateuch, the writer of



our fourth gospel confounded the paschal lamb with the scapegoat. These are mistakes which might be naturally expected to have been made by men, who, in the words of Faustus, were *half Jews*.

It is remarkable, moreover, that the writers of our New Testament were unable to make Jesus improve on the precept (Lev. xix. 18), "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." On the contrary (Matt. xxii. 39, Rom. xiii. 9, Gal. v. 14, Jas. ii. 8), Jesus, Paul, and James avow that all the Mosaic law is fulfilled by the observance of that precept. This proves that the founders of Christianity were defective in point of originality, and that they *copied almost every thing* from the Septuagint. In fact, from what has been said, it is more than probable that our New Testament is a philosophical romance inculcating doctrines compounded of Neoplatonism, Ægypto-Jewish philosophy, Bacchic doctrines derived from the Eleusinian mysteries, and Septuagint theology, thought out at Alexandria, *after* the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70. As has been already shown, the *narratives* contained in our New Testament are ignored utterly by all extant contemporary writers, and by evidence of every kind; and its theology is to be found in the Septuagint.

All extant New Testament writings,—the apocryphal as well as the canonical,—are written some in Syriac, some in Coptic, and most of them in Alexandrine Greek. *But none of them are written in Hebrew.* This is a remarkable fact. It points to Egypt, not Palestine, as being the birth-place of Christianity.\*

\* Gibbon ("Decline and Fall," ch. xv.) says that Christianity "was at first embraced by great numbers of the Therapeutæ, or Essenians of the lake Mareotis, a Jewish sect which had abated much of its reverence for the Mosaic ceremonies. The austere life of the Essenians, their fasts and excommunications, the community of goods, the love of celibacy, their zeal for martyrdom, and the warmth, though not the purity, of their faith already offered a very lively image of the primitive discipline. *It was in the school of Alexandria*

There was, indeed, a tradition in the Christian Church that our first gospel was written in Hebrew; but there is not any evidence proving that any one ever saw that Hebrew gospel.

That the Jews spoke a language different from Greek we know from Josephus ("Wars of the Jews," v. 9, § 2), who tells us that Titus, when ready to attack the Jews in their last intrenchment, "not only proceeded earnestly in the siege, but did not omit to have the Jews exhorted to repentance." And "he entreated them to surrender the city, now in a manner already taken, and thereby to save themselves, and he sent Josephus to *speak to them in their own language*; for he imagined they might yield to the persuasion of a countryman of their own." In the time of Titus, it was as fashionable among the Romans to understand Greek as it was to speak good Latin. Consequently, if the Jews understood Greek, Titus had not any occasion to send Josephus to speak to them. But if the Jews understood only Syro-Chaldee, then we can easily understand why Titus "sent Josephus to speak to them in their own language."

*that the Christian theology appears to have assumed a regular and scientific form; and when Hadrian visited Egypt, he found a church composed of Jews and of Greeks, sufficiently important to attract the notice of that inquisitive prince. But the progress of Christianity was for a long time confined within the limits of a single city, which was itself a foreign colony; and, till the close of the second century, the predecessors of Demetrius were the only prelates of the Christian church. Three bishops were consecrated by the hands of Demetrius, and the number was increased to twenty by the hands of his successor Heraclas. The body of the natives, a people distinguished by a sullen inflexibility of temper, entertained the new doctrine with coldness and reluctance; and even in the time of Origen, it was rare to meet with an Egyptian who had surmounted his early prejudices in favour of the sacred animals of his country. As soon, indeed, as Christianity ascended the throne, the zeal of those barbarians obeyed the prevailing impulsion; the cities of Egypt were filled with bishops, and the deserts of Thebais swarmed with hermits."*

It is admitted that the writers of our New Testament quote from the Septuagint frequently. It is estimated that there are about three hundred and fifty quotations from the Old Testament in the New, and that of these about three hundred are taken from the Septuagint. This proves that the writers could not have been Palestine Jews; for they would no more quote from the Septuagint than a bigoted Roman Catholic would quote from the authorised English version of the Bible, or than a bigoted Protestant would quote from the Douay version. Not only do the writers of our New Testament quote from the Septuagint, but one of them, as before mentioned (*Hebrews* i. 6), actually quotes a verse from the Septuagint (*Deuteronomy* xxxii. 43), which is not to be found in the extant Hebrew text.

It has been said that they quoted from the Septuagint because they wrote for people who spoke Greek; but that could not account for their quoting from the Septuagint where it differs from the Hebrew. Much less could it account for their putting passages from the Septuagint into the speeches of Jesus. This is like making Achilles (see *Iphigenia in Aulis*) and Ajax (see *Aias*) deliver speeches in Attic Greek, which had not any existence at the time of the Trojan war. Of course there cannot be any objection to this in a literary point of view. But what should we say if Euripides and Sophocles had asserted that they heard Achilles and Ajax delivering those speeches? Of course we should regard them as impostors, and their use of the Attic dialect would convict them.

Most remarkable of all is the speech of Stephen (*Acts* vii. 2-53). If the citations in that long defence can be referred to any source, it must be to the Septuagint. But the quotations so frequently differ from both the Septuagint and the Hebrew that it is quite evident the writer of that speech was thinking more of argument than of verifying his quotations. It is remarkable that the writer, in describing Stephen's

speech, addressed to an assembly speaking Syro-Chaldee, makes him quote freely from the Septuagint: he might have been as appropriately described speaking Irish! which, according to Dr Jeffrey Keating, was "the *gartigarran*, or original language spoken in the garden of Eden."\* After praising "the wonderful depth of words" in the speech, Dean Alford says: "It is a hardly disputable inference from chapter vi. 9, that Stephen was a Hellenist: his citations and quasi-citations for the most part agree with the Septuagint version. Hence it seems most probable that he spoke in Greek, which was almost universally understood in Jerusalem. [Although, as we have seen, Josephus had to speak to the Jews in Syro-Chaldee!] If he spoke in Hebrew (Syro-Chaldaic), then either those passages where the Septuagint varies from the Hebrew text must owe their insertion in that shape to some Greek narrator, or to Luke himself,—or Stephen must have, in speaking, translated them, thus varying, into Hebrew."

What a mass of improbabilities is here presented to us by Dean Alford! Yet, observe, they all vanish if we regard our New Testament as containing fragments of an ethical romance, composed by the Jews of Alexandria, *after* the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus: *fragments*, because the history of Jesus Christ contained in our New Testament is palpably incomplete.

*It is impossible to harmonise our gospel narratives.* On this subject Dean Alford (N. T., vol. i., p. 23) observes correctly: "If the evangelists have delivered to us truly and faithfully the apostolic narratives, and if the apostles spoke as the Holy Spirit enabled them, and brought events and sayings to their recollection, then we may be sure that if we knew the real process of the transactions themselves, that knowledge would enable us to give an account of the diversities of narra-

\* See Mr Wm. Pinkerton on "The Irish Harp." "N. & Q.," Sept. 1867.

tion and arrangement which the gospels now present to us. But without such knowledge, all attempts to accomplish this analysis in minute detail must be merely conjectural, and *must tend to weaken the evangelic testimony* rather than to strengthen it."

What an admission from an orthodox commentator!

When we endeavour to identify the scene of the events related in our New Testament with any of the localities in Palestine, we feel painfully the truth of the maxim which says that geography is one of the eyes of history. Such expressions as "by the sea," "into a mountain," "in a desert place," "into the wilderness," and the like, too plainly indicate that the narratives contained in our New Testament have their incidents laid in Palestine by writers who never travelled through that country. Concerning the personal appearance of Jesus and his apostles we know nothing whatever. They are names and nothing more. The reader is supposed to know all about them. While the narratives are pervaded by a caution, a generality, a vagueness, an indistinctness, and an abruptness of transition which deprive them of those characteristics which invariably accompany reality, such narratives cannot have originated in Judea or Palestine.

A very remarkable feature in our New Testament is the disregard shown by the writers for the observance of the seventh day of the week as a day of rest and holiness. See *Matthew* xii. 12, *Mark* ii. 23-28, *Luke* vi. 1-11, *John* v. 9-18. Shortly after the ascension (*Acts* xx. 6-7, *1 Cor.* xvi. 2, *Rev.* i. 10, Justin's "Apology," 87, 89) the first day of the week was substituted for the seventh.

Still more remarkable is the virtual abrogation of the Mosaic Law by the early Christian Church. Although in our gospels (*Matthew* v. 17-19, etc.) Jesus is made to say that he had not come to destroy that code of laws, yet (*Acts* xv.) shortly after the ascension, and at the first supposed oecumenical council almost the whole



Mosaic Law was abrogated, Peter styling it "a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." The only fragments of that "yoke" left remaining were abstinence from things strangled and from blood. Even the fornication permitted (*Numbers xxxi. 35-41*) by that law was abolished.

Such proceedings as these prove that our New Testament was not written by men of an indolent, ceremonious, and conservative mental temperament, but by men whose genius was active, innovating, and progressive; by men who, recognising the exalted morality (*Leviticus xix. 18 and 34*) propounded in some of the Old Testament writings, were yet impatient of formalism, adherence to old abuses and to useless ceremonies. In this respect the contrast between the two Testaments is as strong as that between the mental disposition of the Jews at Jerusalem and at Alexandria. In fact (as before stated at p. 41), it is not within the scope of probability to suppose that our New Testament could have been written by Palestine Jews.

A writer in the "British Quarterly Review" for July 1871, when noticing Professor Jowett's translation of the Dialogues of Plato, p. 155-187, shows that the Christian doctrine of hell is identical with that of Plato, who flourished B.C. 398. While, on the other hand, "Plato's heaven is also, to a considerable extent, the heaven of the Revelation. Both are described in very materialistic terms. To this day, the popular notion of heaven is undoubtedly associated with saints in white garments, crowns and thrones of gold and gems, music, brightness, and eternal hallelujahs. One little coincidence between the Platonic and the Apocalyptic account is too remarkable to be omitted. In Plato (p. 110, D.) we are told that, besides silver and gold, heaven is spangled with gems of which earthly gems are but fragments, 'sardine stones, and also jaspers and emeralds.' In the fourth chapter of Revelation (ver. 3) we read, 'and behold a throne was set in heaven,



and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone ; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.' ”

If Plato were acquainted with the hell and heaven mentioned in our New Testament five centuries before that collection of writings had any known existence, how can the author of Christianity be styled (2 Tim. i. 10) him “ who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel ? ” Plato must have acquired his knowledge of our hell and heaven from speculation, or from inspiration, or from some other speculator. There is not any reason for supposing Plato was acquainted with Jewish theology or traditions. The probability is “ that the belief in a penal state of existence after death (so clearly developed in the well-known passage of Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 735 *seq.*), like that of a Last Judgment, had its origin rather in the speculation of mystics, and passed into the popular theology of Christian teachers.”

“ Scarcely less remarkable is the coincidence of the *four rivers* that surround the abode of shades in the under world (*Phædo.*, p. 112, E.), and the four rivers (Genesis ii. 10-14) that encompassed the ‘ Garden of Eden.’ ”

When speaking of the martyrs to the Truth who had preceded him, the Jesus of our New Testament (Matt. xxiii. 35, Luke xi. 51) is made to mention the first martyr, Abel, and the last Jewish martyr, “ Zacharias, son of Barachias,” a man who (Josephus’ *Wars of the Jews*, iv. 5, § 4) was murdered just before the siege of Jerusalem by Titus. This Zacharias was accused falsely by the Zealots “ of a design to betray their polity to the Romans, and of having sent traitorously to Vespasian for that purpose.” But Zacharias “ in a few words confuted the crimes laid to his charge.” “ The seventy judges brought in their verdict, that the person accused was not guilty—choosing rather to die themselves with

him than to have his death laid at their doors; here-upon there arose a great clamour of the Zealots upon his acquittal, and they all had indignation at the judges, for not understanding that the authority that was given to them was but in jest. So two of the boldest of them fell upon Zacharias in the middle of the temple, and slew him."

In our Iliad and Odyssey, and in the Cyclic Poems, we have four editions of Ajax and four of Achilles.

In our New Testament we have four editions of Jesus, namely that (i.) in the Apocalypse, where he is a vindictive being; (ii.) that in the Pauline epistles, where Jesus is a benign being; (iii.) that in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where Jesus is a man who claims to be considered the Christ, *although he never was anointed*;\* and (iv.) that in the Gospel of John, where Jesus is represented as being the *Logos* or divine word spoken of by Philo Judæus.

Also in our New Testament we have four editions of the Apostle Peter, namely (i.) that in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where Peter is represented as the foremost apostle; (ii.) that in the Pauline epistles, where Paul is represented as Peter's equal; (iii.) that in the book of "Acts," where Paul is represented as Peter's superior; and (iv.) that in the unique fourth gospel, where *John* is represented as being Peter's superior! Can any rational man imagine these various and inconsistent statements to be valid and historical accounts of real human beings?

In conclusion, it should be borne in mind that if we suppose that the writers of our New Testament were Alexandrine Jews, ignorant of Hebrew and Chaldee, that they were ignorant of Palestine localities, that our

\* The omission of this essential qualification—a qualification, in the words of Burke, "conspicuous by its absence,"—detects unmistakably "the cloven foot;" at least to every such person as deserves to be called, in the words of Griesbach, *emunctioris naris criticus*.

New Testament was written *after* the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and that its narrative is a romance, like Xenophon's *Cyropædia*, or the book of *Daniel*, not a genuine history, then we have a hypothesis which accounts—

1. For the existence in our New Testament of quotations from the Septuagint, even where it differs from the extant Hebrew.
2. For the uniformity of the dialect in our New Testament amidst the variety of styles.
3. For the very imperfect knowledge which the writers exhibit of the laws, manners, and customs of the Palestine Jews.
4. For the mixing of Jewish monotheism and Grecian sacrifice.
5. For the vagueness of the gospel narratives.
6. For the different editions of doctrines and men contained in our New Testament.
7. For the inversion of the triumphant Christ of the Old Testament into the suffering Christ of the New.
8. For the conflicting histories of St Paul in *Acts* ix, xi. and xiii. and in *Galatians* i. and ii. and *Romans* xv. 19.
9. For representing Syro-Chaldee speaking Jews as understanding words such as "legion," "Peter," the play on the words *pétra* and *pétros*, &c., &c.
10. For the unique identification in our fourth gospel of Philo's *logos* with the Jewish *christos*.
11. For the reception by the Christian Church of our fourth gospel.
12. For the introduction of Plato's heaven into our Apocalypse.
13. For the prevalence of allegory in our New Testament; and its application there not only to events, but also to words and ceremonies.
14. For the absence of all notice regarding the inci-

- dents related in our new Testament narratives by all writers who flourished in Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Palestine between A.D. 1 and A.D. 70.
15. For the constant endeavour to make incidents in our New Testament narratives verify Old Testament statements and prophecies.
  16. For the fragmentary forms of our gospel narratives, forming, as they do, the history of only three or four years of Jesus' life, or probably only one year.
  17. For the principal characters in those narratives being generally assumed as being well known to the reader.
  18. For the impossibility of harmonizing the discrepancies in our New Testament narratives.
  19. And for the fact that our four gospels are so often and so familiarly quoted by Irenæus, who was Bishop of Lyons A.D. 177, and *so rarely, if ever, by preceding writers.*

Here we have nineteen difficulties solved : difficulties deemed insuperable hitherto. Perhaps there never will be devised a hypothesis which will explain the exact cause, date, circumstances, and method whereby the compilation of our New Testament has been accomplished. Scarcely any thing can be more remarkable than the way in which our New Testament writings appear silently, as it were, in Christian ecclesiastical literature. At first, they appear in mere glimpses in Justin Martyr, then a little more explicitly in Tatian, Theophilus, and Athenagoras, until they seem to burst into full recognition in the writings of Irenæus. That writings of such ecclesiastical merit as those contained in our New Testament, if really so ancient as they are generally supposed to be, should have taken so long a time to work themselves into acceptance by the Christian Church, and to supersede the so-called Apocryphal New Testament writings, is as difficult to believe as it is that the mathematical demonstrations contained in the works

of Sir Isaac Newton could have preceded the comparatively crude and inconclusive arguments contained in the writings of Nicholas Copernicus. But the truth is that there is not any evidence whatever that *Christianity* existed in *any shape* during the first seventy years of our first century. Even the existence of synods or councils cannot be shewn to have taken place during our first century. Both Mosheim (*Institutes*, century ii., part ii. chapter ii. § 3), and Mr Charles J. Hefele ("History of the Christian Councils," p. 17, translated and edited by Mr Wm. R. Clarke), admit that there is not any trace of synods or councils during our first century. Mosheim's words are that "conventions of delegates from the several churches assembled for deliberation, were called by the Greeks, synods, and by the Latins, councils; and the laws agreed upon in them were called canons or rules. These councils, *of which no vestige appears before the middle of this century*,\* changed nearly the whole form of the church." And though Hefele thinks that the earliest synods—the first *council* was that of Nice, A.D. 325—were those held in Asia Minor, on the appearance of Montanism, about the middle of the second century, yet he cannot give these synods definite times and places, and he admits (p. 79) that "the dates of these synods is nowhere exactly pointed out." The earliest synod he appears to have succeeded in finding is that of Alexandria, held in the year A.D. 231. That *Alexandria* should have been the place where the first Christian synod assembled is remarkable.

#### PERSECUTIONS.

But it would be an error to suppose that the exploits of Jesus and his immediate followers formed the subject of *all* the romances written by the primitive Christians. Vulgar vanity delights to dwell on the contemplation of its real or imaginary sufferings. In the hour of

\* *i.e.*, the second century.

triumph it is delightful to trample on the descendants of those who oppressed our ancestors. Ten persecutions of the primitive Christians by the Roman emperors are enumerated by the Christian fathers, namely, those under Nero, A.D. 64; under Domitian, A.D. 95; under Trajan, A.D. 106; under Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 166; under Maximin, A.D. 235; under Decius, A.D. 250; under Valerian, A.D. 258; under Aurelian, A.D. 275; and under Diocletian and Maximinian, A.D. 303.

It is with only the first three of these persecutions that this tract has any concern.

It has been shown already that Nero had not any Christians to persecute, because he perished A.D. 68, *before* the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and, consequently, *before* Christians had any real existence.

Eusebius is the only authority for the persecution under Domitian. Between these two men there is a gulf of two centuries and a half. Eusebius was notoriously defective in judgment, honesty, and accuracy, and his mere statement is not of any value.

For the persecution under Trajan there is not any authority except the younger Pliny's letter, which has been already disposed of. And what has been above brought forward to throw discredit on the Trajan persecution is fully corroborated by those legends of Holy Romance which relate that Trajan or Hadrian (no matter which) crucified on Mount Ararat ten thousand Christian soldiers in one day! See "Decline and Fall," chapter xvi., note 74.

A Christian writer, Sulpicius Severus, who died about A.D. 422, was the first author of the computation which enumerated the celebrated number of *ten* persecutions. At the same time he seemed desirous of reserving the tenth and greatest persecution for the coming of Antichrist. It is very probable that Sulpicius made the groundwork of his computation the *ten* horns of the Apocalypse, and the *ten* plagues of Ægypt.

But whatever may be thought concerning the



authorities here criticised, there is still extant the authority of the intelligent, learned, and candid Origen, who flourished about A.D. 220, and who, by both his experience and reading, was intimately acquainted with the history of the Christians. He declares explicitly that the number of Christians put to death for their religion was inconsiderable. (See the tract "Against Celsus," book iii., p. 116.) His words rendered into English are, "Those who have been put to death on account of Christian godliness are comparatively few, and very easily counted."

In short, it may be concluded safely that the Christian religion was invented by Alexandrine Jews to supply more wants than one, namely, the want of the daily sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem, taken away by the destruction of that city by Titus—the want of an explanation for Jehovah's non-interference on behalf of his chosen people—the want of an explanation for the absence of the triumphant Christ at the expected time—and the want of grounds for hoping that the triumphant Christ will yet appear. The supply of these wants attracted naturally those Alexandrine Jews, who were neither pure Jews nor heathens. The manufacture of the Christian narratives, when "nailed with Scripture" from the Septuagint, did not offer any critical difficulty to Alexandrine Jews seventeen centuries ago. That which was desired earnestly was believed easily. The obscurity of the real primitive Christians preserved them from persecution. When, about the middle of our second century, they at length attracted attention, *their ecclesiastical organisation* preserved them from destruction. When (A.D. 313) the emperor Constantine took the Christians under his care, the swords of the Roman soldiers spread the Christian Church over the Roman empire. There is not anything supernatural in all these matters. Although the origin of Christianity has long been hidden in imaginary darkness, yet the eye of Reason can now

penetrate that gloom. Christianity is like all other religions ; it is a tale of thaumaturgies which never did, and the like of which never will take place ; because they are forbidden by the inexorable laws of Nature, which are now beginning to be really understood, and which enable the sincere adherents of Truth to say with safety, " WE ARE ABLE TO SEE THE LIGHT."