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THE FREETHINKER'S TEXT-BOOK.

EDITED BY


CHARLES BRADLAUGH, ANNIE BESANT, AND
CHARLES WATTS.

PART II.
CHRISTIANITY.
BY ANNIE BESANT.


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even praiseworthy, to deceive, and even to use the expedient of a lie, in order to advance the cause of truth and piety. The Jews, who lived in Egypt, had learned and received this maxim from them, before the coming of Christ, as appears incontestably from a multitude of ancient records; and the Christians were infected from both these sources with the same pernicious error; as appears from the number of books attributed falsely to great and venerable names, from the Sibylline verses, and several supposititious productions which were spread abroad in this and the following century. It does not, indeed, seem probable that all these pious frauds were chargeable upon the professors of real Christianity, upon those who entertained just and rational sentiments of the religion of Jesus. The greatest part of these fictitious writings undoubtedly flowed from the fertile invention of the Gnostic sects, though it cannot be affirmed that even true Christians were entirely innocent and irreproachable in this matter" (Ibid, p. 55). "This disingenuous and vicious method of surprising their adversaries by artifice, and striking them down, as it were, by lies and fiction, produced, among other disagreeable effects, a great number of books, which were falsely attributed to certain great men, in order to give these spurious productions more credit and weight" (Ibid, page 77). These forged writings being so widely circulated, it will be readily understood that "It is not so easy a matter as is commonly imagined rightly to settle the Canon of the New Testament. For my own part, I declare, with many learned men, that, in the whole compass of learning, I know no question involved with more intricacies and perplexing difficulties than this. There are, indeed, considerable difficulties relating to the Canon of the Old Testament, as appears by the large controversies between the Protestants and Papists on this head in the last, and latter end of the preceding, century; but these are solved with much more ease than those of the New.....In settling the old Testament collection, all that is requisite is to disprove the claim of a few obscure books, which have but the weakest pretences to be looked upon as Scripture; but, in the New, we have not only a few to disprove, but a vast number to exclude [from] the Canon, which seem to have much more right to admission than any of the apocryphal books of the Old Testament; and, besides, to evidence the genuineness of all those which we do receive, since,

according to the sentiments of some who would be thought learned, there are none of them whose authority has not been controverted in the earliest ages of Christianity..... The number of books that claim admission [to the canon] is very considerable. Mr. Toland, in his celebrated catalogue, has presented us with the names of above eighty..... There are many more of the same sort which he has not mentioned" (J. Jones on "The Canon of the New Testament," vol. i., pp. 2—4. Ed. 1788).

The following list will give some idea of the number of the apocryphal writings from which the four Gospels, and other books of the New Testament, finally emerge as canonical:—

GOSPELS.

1. Gospel according to the Hebrews.
2. Gospel written by Judas Iscariot.
3. Gospel of Truth, made use of by the Valentinians.
4. Gospel of Peter.
5. Gospel according to the Egyptians.
6. Gospel of Valentinus.
7. Gospel of Marcion.
8. Gospel according to the Twelve Apostles.
9. Gospel of Basilides.
10. Gospel of Thomas (extant).
11. Gospel of Matthias.
12. Gospel of Tatian.
13. Gospel of Scythianus.
14. Gospel of Bartholomew.
15. Gospel of Apelles.
16. Gospels published by Lucianus and Hesychius.
17. Gospel of Perfection.
18. Gospel of Eve.
19. Gospel of Philip.
20. Gospel of the Nazarenes (qy. same as first).
21. Gospel of the Ebionites.
22. Gospel of Jude.
23. Gospel of Encratites.
24. Gospel of Cerinthus.
25. Gospel of Merinthus.
26. Gospel of Thaddæus.
27. Gospel of Barnabas.
28. Gospel of Andrew.
29. Gospel of the Infancy (extant).

30. Gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of Pilate and Descent of Christ to the Under World (extant).
31. Gospel of James, or Protevangelium (extant).
32. Gospel of the Nativity of Mary (extant).
33. Arabic Gospel of the Infancy (extant).
34. Syriac Gospel of the Boyhood of our Lord Jesus (extant).

MISCELLANEOUS.

35. Letter to Agbarus by Christ (extant).
36. Letter to Leopas by Christ (extant).
37. Epistle to Peter and Paul by Christ.
38. Epistle by Christ produced by Manichees.
39. Hymn by Christ (extant).
40. Magical Book by Christ.
41. Prayer by Christ (extant).
42. Preaching of Peter.
43. Revelation of Peter.
44. Doctrine of Peter.
45. Acts of Peter.
46. Book of Judgment by Peter.
47. Book, under the name of Peter, forged by Lentius.
48. Preaching of Peter and Paul at Rome.
49. The Vision, or Acts of Paul and Thecla.
50. Acts of Paul.
51. Preaching of Paul.
52. Piece under name of Paul, forged by an "anonymous writer in Cyprian's time."
53. Epistle to the Laodiceans under name of Paul (extant).
54. Six letters to Seneca under name of Paul (extant).
55. Anabaticon or Revelation of Paul.
56. The traditions of Matthias.
57. Book of James.
58. Book, under name of James, forged by Ebionites.
59. Acts of Andrew, John, and Thomas.
60. Acts of John.
61. Book, under name of John, forged by Ebionites.
62. Book under name of John.
63. Book, under name of John, forged by Lentius.
64. Acts of Andrew.
65. Book under name of Andrew.
66. Book, under name of Andrew, by Naxochristes and Leonides.
67. Book under name of Thomas.

68. Acts of Thomas.
69. Revelation of Thomas.
70. Writings of Bartholomew.
71. Book, under name of Matthew, forged by Ebionites.
72. Acts of the Apostles by Leuthon, or Seleucus.
73. Acts of the Apostles used by Ebionites.
74. Acts of the Apostles by Lenticius.
75. Acts of the Apostles used by Manichees.
76. History of the Twelve Apostles by Abdias (extant).
77. Creed of the Apostles (extant).
78. Constitutions of the Apostles (extant).
79. Acts, under Apostles' names, by Leontius.
80. Acts, under Apostles' names, by Lenticius.
81. Catholic Epistle, in imitation of the Apostles of Themis, on the Montanists.
82. Revelation of Cerinthus, nominally apostolical.
83. Book of the Helkesaites which fell from Heaven.
84. Books of Lentitius.
85. Revelation of Stephen.
86. Works of Dionysius the Areopagite (extant).
87. History of Joseph the carpenter (extant).
88. Letter of Agbarus to Jesus (extant).
89. Letter of Lentulus (extant).
90. Story of Veronica (extant).
91. Letter of Pilate to Tiberius (extant).
92. Letters of Pilate to Herod (extant).
93. Epistle of Pilate to Cæsar (extant).
94. Report of Pilate the Governor (extant).
95. Trial and condemnation of Pilate (extant).
96. Death of Pilate (extant).
97. Story of Joseph of Arimathæa (extant).
98. Revenging of the Saviour (extant).
99. Epistle of Barnabas.
100. Epistle of Polycarp.
- 101—115. Fifteen epistles of Ignatius (see above, pages 217—220.)
116. Shepherd of Hermas.
117. First Epistle to the Corinthians of Clement (possibly partly authentic).
118. Second Epistle to the Corinthians of Clement.
119. Apostolic Canons of Clement.
120. Recognitions of Clement and Clementina.
- 121—122. Two Epistles of St. Clement of Rome (written in Syriac).

123—128. Six books of Justin Martyr.

129—132. Four books of Justin Martyr.

The above are collected from Jones' *On the Canon, Supernatural Religion*, Eusebius, Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Cowper's *Apocryphal Gospels*, Dr. Giles' *Christian Records*, and the *Apostolic Fathers*.

After reading this list, the student will be able to appreciate the value of Paley's argument, that, "if it had been an easy thing in the early times of the institution to have forged Christian writings, and to have obtained currency and reception to the forgeries, we should have had many appearing in the name of Christ himself" ("Evidences," p. 106). Paley acknowledges "one attempt of this sort, deserving of the smallest notice;" and, in a note, adds three more of those mentioned above. Let us see what the evidence is of the genuineness of the letter to Agbarus, the "one attempt" in question, as given by Eusebius. Agbarus, the prince of Edessa, reigning "over the nations beyond the Euphrates with great glory," was afflicted with an incurable disease, and, hearing of Jesus, sent to him to entreat deliverance. The letter of Agbarus is carried to Jesus, "at Jerusalem, by Ananias, the courier," and the answer of Jesus, also written, is returned by the same hands. The letter of Jesus runs as follows, and is written in Syriac: "Blessed art thou, O Agbarus, who, without seeing me, hast believed in me! For it is written concerning me, that they who have seen me will not believe, that they who have not seen me may believe and live. But in regard to what thou hast written, that I should come to thee, it is necessary that I should fulfil all things here, for which I have been sent. And, after this fulfilment, thus to be received again by Him that sent me. And after I have been received up, I will send to thee a certain one of my disciples, that he may heal thy affliction, and give life to thee, and to those who are with thee." After the ascension of Jesus, Thaddæus, one of the seventy, is sent to Edessa, and lodges in the house of Tobias, the son of Tobias, and heals Agbarus and many others. "These things were done in the 340th year" (Eusebius does not state what he reckons from). The proof given by Eusebius for the truth of the account is as follows: "Of this also we have the evidence, in a written answer, taken from the public records of the city of Edessa, then under the government of the king. For, in the public registers

there, which embrace the ancient history and the transactions of Agbarus, these circumstances respecting him are found still preserved down to the present day. There is nothing, however, like hearing the epistles themselves, taken by us from the archives, and the style of it, as it has been literally translated by us, from the Syriac language " ("Eccles. Hist.," bk. i., chap. xiii.). And Paley calls this an attempt at forgery, "deserving of the smallest notice," and dismisses it in a few lines. It would be interesting to know for what other "Scripture," canonical or uncanonical, there is evidence of authenticity so strong as for this; exactness of detail in names; absence of any exaggeration more than is implied in recounting any miracle; the transaction recorded in the public archives; seen there by Eusebius himself; copied down and translated by him; such evidence for any one of the Gospels would make belief far easier than it is at present. The assertion of Eusebius was easily verifiable at the time (to use the favourite argument of Christians for the truth of any account); and if Eusebius here wrote falsely, of what value is his evidence on any other point? A Freethinker may fairly urge that Eusebius is *not* trustworthy, and that this assertion of his about the archives is as likely to be false as true; but the Christian can scarcely admit this, when so much depends, for him, on the reliability of the great Church historian, all whose evidence would become worthless if he be once allowed to have deliberately fabricated that which did not exist.

We have already noticed the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, and pointed out the numerous forgeries circulated under their names, and the consequent haze hanging over all the early Christian writers, until we reach the time of Justin Martyr. Thus we entirely destroy the whole basis of Paley's argument, that "the historical books of the New Testament.....are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of Christian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the Apostles, or who immediately followed them" ("Evidences," page 111); for we have no certain writings of any such contemporaries. In dealing with the positions *f.* and *h.*, we shall seek to prove that in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers—taking them as genuine—as well as in Justin Martyr, and in other Christian works up to about A.D. 180, the quotations said to be from the canonical Gospels conclusively show that other Gospels were used, and not our present ones; but no fur-

ther evidence than the long list of apocryphal writings, given on pp. 240—243 is needed in order to prove our first proposition, that *forgeries, bearing the name of Christ, of the apostles, and of the early fathers, were very common in the primitive Church.*

B. “*That there is nothing to distinguish the canonical from the apocryphal writings.*” “Their pretences are specious and plausible, for the most part going under the name of our Saviour himself, his apostles, their companions, or immediate successors. They are generally thought to be cited by the first Christian writers with the same authority (at least, many of them) as the sacred books we receive. This Mr. Toland labours hard to persuade us; but, what is more to be regarded, men of greater merit and probity have unwarily dropped expressions of the like nature. *Everybody knows* (says the learned Casaubon against Cardinal Baronius) *that Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, and the rest of the primitive writers, were wont to approve and cite books which now all men know to be apocryphal. Clemens Alexandrinus* (says his learned annotator, Sylburgius) *was too much pleased with apocryphal writings.* Mr. Dodwell (in his learned dissertation on Irenæus) tells us that, *till Trajan, or, perhaps, Adrian’s time, no canon was fixed; the supposititious pieces of the heretics were received by the faithful, the apostles’ writings bound up with theirs, and indifferently used in the churches.* To mention no more, the learned Mr. Spanheim observes, *that Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen very often cite apocryphal books under the express name of Scripture.*.....How much Mr. Whiston has enlarged the Canon of the New Testament, is sufficiently known to the learned among us. For the sake of those who have not perused his truly valuable books I would observe, that he imagines the ‘Constitutions of the Apostles’ to be inspired, and of greater authority than the occasional writings of single Apostles and Evangelists. That the two Epistles of Clemens, the Doctrine of the Apostles, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, the second book of Esdras, the Epistles of Ignatius, and the Epistle of Polycarp, are to be reckoned among the sacred authentic books of the New Testament; as also that the Acts of Paul, the Revelation, Preaching, Gospel and Acts of Peter, were sacred books, and, if they were extant, should be of the same authority as any of the rest”

(J. Jones, on the "Canon," p. 4—6). This same learned writer further says: "That many, or most of the books of the New Testament, have been rejected by heretics in the first ages, is also certain. Faustus Manichæus and his followers are said to have rejected all the New Testament, as not written by the Apostles. Marcion rejected all, except St. Luke's Gospel. The Manichees disputed much against the authority of St. Matthew's Gospel. The Alogians rejected the Gospel of St. John as not his, but made by Cerinthus. The Acts of the Apostles were rejected by Severus, and the sect of his name. The same rejected all Paul's Epistles, as also did the Ebionites, and the Helkesaites. Others, who did not reject all, rejected some particular epistles.....Several of the books of the New Testament were not universally received, even among them who were not heretics, in the first ages..... Several of them have had their authority disputed by learned men in later times" (Ibid, pp. 8, 9).

If recognition by the early writers be taken as a proof of the authenticity of the works quoted, many apocryphal documents must stand high. Eusebius, who ranks together the Acts of Paul, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Revelation of Peter, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Institutions of the Apostles, and the Revelation of John (now accounted canonical) says that these were not embodied in the Canon (in his time) "notwithstanding that they are recognised by most ecclesiastical writers" ("Eccles. Hist.," bk. iii., chap. xxv.). The Canon, in his time, was almost the same as at present, but the canonicity of the epistles of James and Jude, the 2nd of Peter, the 2nd and 3rd of John, and the Revelation, was disputed even as late as when he wrote. Irenæus ranks the Pastor of Hermas as Scripture; "he not only knew, but also admitted the book called Pastor" (Ibid, bk. v., chap. viii.). "The Pastor of Hermas is another work which very nearly secured permanent canonical rank with the writings of the New Testament. It was quoted as Holy Scripture by the Fathers, and held to be divinely inspired, and it was publicly read in the churches. It has place with the Epistle of Barnabas in the Sinaitic Codex, after the canonical books" ("Supernatural Religion," vol. i., p. 261).

The two Epistles of Clement are only "preserved to us in the Codex Alexandrinus, a MS. assigned by the most competent judges to the second half of the fifth, or beginning of

the sixth century, in which these Epistles follow the books of the New Testament. The second Epistle.....thus shares with the first the honour of a canonical position in one of the most ancient codices of the New Testament" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. i., p. 220). These epistles are, also, amongst those mentioned in the Apostolic Canons. "Until a comparatively late date this [the first of Clement] Epistle was quoted as Holy Scripture" (Ibid, p. 222). Origen quotes the Epistle of Barnabas as Scripture, and calls it a "Catholic Epistle" (Ibid, p. 237), and this same Father regards the Shepherd of Hermas as also divinely inspired. (Norton's "Genuineness of the Gospels," vol. i., p. 341). Gospels, other than the four canonical, are quoted as authentic by the earliest Christian writers, as we shall see in establishing position *h*; thus destroying Paley's contention ("Evidences," p. 187) that there are no quotations from apocryphal writings in the Apostolical Fathers, the fact being that such quotations are sown throughout their supposed writings.

It is often urged that the expression, "it is written," is enough to prove that the quotation following it is of canonical authority.

"Now with regard to the value of the expression, 'it is written,' it may be remarked that in no case could its use, in the Epistle of Barnabas, indicate more than individual opinion, and it could not, for reasons to be presently given, be considered to represent the opinion of the Church. In the very same chapter in which the formula is used in connection with the passage we are considering, it is also employed to introduce a quotation from the Book of Enoch, *περὶ οὗ γέγραπται ὡς Ἐνὼχ λέγει*, and elsewhere (c. xii.) he quotes from another apocryphal book as one of the prophets.....He also quotes (c. vi.) the apocryphal book of Wisdom as Holy Scripture, and in like manner several unknown works. When it is remembered that the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, the Pastor of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas itself, and many other apocryphal works have been quoted by the Fathers as Holy Scripture, the distinctive value of such an expression may be understood" (Ibid, pp. 242, 243). "The first Christian writers.....quote ecclesiastical books from time to time as if they were canonical" (Westcott on "The Canon," p. 9). "In regard to the use of the word *γέγραπται*, introducing the quotation, the same writer [Hilgenfeld]

urges reasonably enough that it cannot surprise us at a time when we learn from Justin Martyr that the Gospels were read regularly at public worship [or rather, that the memorials of the Apostles were so read]; it ought not, however, to be pressed too far as involving a claim to special divine inspiration, as the same word is used in the epistle in regard to the apocryphal book of Enoch; and it is clear, also, from Justin, that the Canon of the Gospels was not yet formed, but only forming" ("Gospels in the Second Century," Rev. W. Sanday, p. 73. Ed. 1876). Yet, in spite of all this, Paley says, "The phrase, 'it is written,' was the very form in which the Jews quoted their Scriptures. It is not probable, therefore, that he would have used this phrase, and without qualification, of any books but what had acquired a kind of Scriptural authority" ("Evidences," p. 113). Tischendorf argues on Paley's lines and says that "it was natural, therefore, to apply this form of expression to the Apostles' writings, as soon as they had been placed in the Canon with the books of the Old Testament. When we find, therefore, in ancient ecclesiastical writings, quotations from the Gospels introduced with this formula, 'it is written,' we must infer that, at the time when the expression was used, the Gospels were certainly treated as of equal authority with the books of the Old Testament" ("When Were Our Gospels Written?" p. 89. Eng. Ed., 1867). Dr. Tischendorf, if he believe in his own argument, must greatly enlarge his Canon of the New Testament.

Paley's further plea that "these apocryphal writings were not read in the churches of Christians" ("Evidences," p. 187) is thoroughly false. Eusebius tells us of the Pastor of Hermas: "We know that it has been already in public use in our churches" ("Eccles. Hist.," bk. iii., ch. 3). Clement's Epistle "was publicly read in the churches at the Sunday meetings of Christians" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. i., p. 222). Dionysius of Corinth mentions this same early habit of reading any valued writing in the churches: "In this same letter he mentions that of Clement to the Corinthians, showing that it was the practice to read in the churches, even from the earliest times. 'To-day,' says he, 'we have passed the Lord's holy-day, in which we have read your epistle, in reading which we shall always have our minds stored with admonition, as we shall, also, from that written to us before by Clement'" (Eusebius' "Eccles. Hist.," bk. iv., ch. 23). So far is "reading in the churches" to be accepted as a

proof, even of canonicity, much less of genuineness, that Eusebius remarks that "the disputed writings" were "publicly used by many in most of the churches" (Ibid, bk. iii., ch. 31). Paley then takes as a further mark of distinction, between canonical and uncanonical, that the latter "were not admitted into their volume" and "do not appear in their catalogues," but we have already seen that the only MS. copy of Clement's first Epistle is in the Codex Alexandrinus (see ante p. 246), while the Epistle of Barnabas and the Pastor of Hermas find their place in the Sinaitic Codex (see ante p. 246); the second Epistle of Clement is also in the Codex Alexandrinus, and both epistles are in the Apostolic constitutions (see ante p. 247). The Canon of Muratori—worthless as it is, it is used as evidence by Christians—brackets the Apocalypse of John and of Peter ("Sup. Rel.," vol. ii., p. 241). Canon Westcott says: "'Apocryphal' writings were added to manuscripts of the New Testament, and read in churches; and the practice thus begun continued for a long time. The Epistle of Barnabas was still read among the 'apocryphal Scriptures' in the time of Jerome; a translation of the Shepherd of Hermas is found in a MS. of the Latin Bible as late as the fifteenth century. The spurious Epistle to the Laodicenes is found very commonly in English copies of the Vulgate from the ninth century downwards, and an important catalogue of the Apocrypha of the New Testament is added to the Canon of Scripture subjoined to the Chronographia of Nicephorus, published in the ninth century" ("On the Canon," pp. 8, 9). Paley's fifth distinction, that they "were not noticed by their [heretical] adversaries" is as untrue as the preceding ones, for even the fragments of "the adversaries" preserved in Christian documents bear traces of reference to the apocryphal writings, although, owing to the orthodox custom of destroying unorthodox books, references of any sort by heretics are difficult to find. Again, Paley should have known, when he asserted that the uncanonical writings were not alleged as of authority, that the heretics *did* appeal to gospels other than the canonical. Marcion, for instance, maintained a Gospel varying from the recognised one, while the Ebionites contended that their Hebrew Gospel was the only true one. Eusebius further tells us of books "adduced by the heretics under the name of the Apostles, such, viz., as compose the Gospels of Peter, Thomas, and Matthew, and others beside

them, or such as contain the Acts of the Apostles, by Andrew and John, and others" ("Eccles. Hist," bk. iii., ch. 25. See also ante p. 246). It is hard to believe that Paley was so grossly ignorant as to know nothing of these facts; did he then deliberately state what he knew to be utterly untrue? His last "mark" does not touch our position, as the commentaries, etc., are too late to be valuable as evidence for the alleged superiority of the canonical writings during the first two centuries. The other section of Paley's argument, that "when the Scriptures [a very vague word] are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted with peculiar respect, as books *sui generis*" is met by the details given above as to the fashion in which the Fathers referred to the writings now called uncanonical, and by the evidence adduced in this section we may fairly claim to have proved that, so far as external testimony goes, *there is nothing to distinguish the canonical from the apocryphal writings.*

But there is another class of evidence relied upon by Christians, wherewith they seek to build up an impassable barrier between their sacred books and the dangerous uncanonical Scriptures, namely, the intrinsic difference between them, the dignity of the one, and the puerility of the other. Of the uncanonical Gospels Dr. Ellicott writes: "Their real demerits, their mendacities, their absurdities, their coarseness, the barbarities of their style, and the inconsequence of their narratives, have never been excused or condoned" ("Cambridge Essays," for 1856, p. 153, as quoted in introduction of "The Apocryphal Gospels," by B. H. Cowper, p. x. Ed. 1867). "We know before we read them that they are weak, silly, and profitless—that they are despicable monuments even of religious fiction" (Ibid, p. xlvii). How far are such harsh expressions consonant with fact? It is true that many of the tales related are absurd, but are they more absurd than the tales related in the canonical Gospels? One story, repeated with variations, runs as follows: "This child Jesus, being five years old, was playing at the crossing of a stream, and he collected the running waters into pools, and immediately made them pure; and by his word alone he commanded them. And having made some soft clay, he fashioned out of it twelve sparrows; and it was the Sabbath when he did these things. And there were also many other children playing with him. And a certain Jew, seeing what Jesus did, playing on the Sabbath, went immediately and said to Joseph, his father,

Behold, thy child is at the water-course, and hath taken clay and formed twelve birds, and hath profaned the Sabbath. And Joseph came to the place, and when he saw him, he cried unto him, saying, Why art thou doing these things on the Sabbath, which it is not lawful to do? And Jesus clapped his hands, and cried unto the sparrows, and said to them, Go away; and the sparrows flew up and departed, making a noise. And the Jews who saw it were astonished, and went and told their leaders what they had seen Jesus do" ("Gospel of Thomas: Apocryphal Gospels," B. H. Cowper, pp. 130, 131). Making the water pure by a word is no more absurd than turning water into wine (John ii. 1—11); or than sending an angel to trouble it, and thereby making it health-giving (John v. 2—4); or than casting a tree into bitter waters, and making them sweet (Ex. xv. 25). The fashioning of twelve sparrows out of soft clay is not stranger than making a woman out of a man's rib (Gen. ii. 21); neither is it more, or nearly so, curious as making clay with spittle, and plastering it on a blind man's eyes in order to make him see (John ix. 6); nay, arguing *à la* F. D. Maurice, a very strong reason might be made out for this proceeding. Thus, Jesus came to reveal the Father to men, and his miracles were specially arranged to show how God works in the world; by turning the water into wine, and by multiplying the loaves, he reminds men that it is God whose hand feeds them by all the ordinary processes of nature. In this instructive miracle of the clay formed into sparrows, which fly away at his bidding, Jesus reveals his unity with the Father, as the Word by whom all things were originally made; for "out of the ground, the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air" (Gen. ii. 19) at the creation, and when the Son was revealed to bring about the new creation, what more appropriate miracle could he perform than this reminiscence of paradise, clearly suggesting to the Jews that the Jehovah, who, of old, formed the fowls of the air out of the ground, was present among them in the incarnate Word, performing the same mighty work? Exactly in this fashion do Maurice, Robertson, and others of their school, deal with the miracles of Christ recorded in the canonical gospels (see Maurice on the Miracles, Sermon IV., in "What is Revelation?"). The number, twelve, is also significant, being that of the tribes of Israel, and the local colouring—the complaining Jews and the violated Sabbath—is in perfect har-

mony with the other gospels. The action of Jesus, vindicating the conduct complained of by the performance of a miracle, is in the fullest accord with similar instances related in the received stories. It is, however, urged that some of the miracles of Jesus, as given in the apocrypha, are dishonouring to him, because of their destructive character; the son of Annas, the scribe, spills the water the child Jesus has collected, and Jesus gets angry and says, "Thou also shalt wither like a tree;" and "suddenly the boy withered altogether" (Ap. Gos., p. 131). This seems in thorough unity with the spirit Jesus showed in later life, when he cursed the fig-tree, because it did not bear fruit in the wrong season, and "presently the fig-tree withered away" (Matt. xxi. 19). Or a child, running against him purposely, falls dead; or a master lifting his hand against him, has the arm withered which essays to strike. Later, of Judas, who betrays him, we read that, "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts i. 18); while, in the Old Testament, which speaks of Christ, we are told, in figures, we learn that, when Jeroboam tried to seize a prophet, "his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him" (1 Kings xiii. 4). If destructiveness be thought injurious when related of Jesus, what shall we say to the wanton destruction of the herd of swine which Jesus filled with devils, and sent racing into the sea? (Matt. viii. 28—34.) The miracle the child works to rectify a mistake of his father's in his carpenter's business, taking hold of some wood which has been cut too short and lengthening it, is certainly not more silly than the miracle worked by the man when money is short, and he (Matt. xvii. 24—27) sends Peter to catch a fish with money in its mouth (why not, by the way, have fished directly for the coin? it would be quite as possible for a coin to transfix itself on a hook, as for a fish, with a piece of money in its mouth, to swallow a hook). Other miracles recorded in the apocryphal gospels, of healing and of raising the dead, are identical in spirit with those told of him in the canonical. We may also remark that, unless there were some received traditions of miracles worked by Jesus in his household, there is no reason for the evident expectation of some help which is said to have been shown by Mary when the guests want wine at the wedding (John ii. 3—5). That verse 11 states that this was his first miracle is only one of the many inconsistencies of the gospel stories.

Passing from these gospels of the infancy to those which tell of the sufferings of Jesus, we shall find in the "Gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of Pilate," much that shows their full accordance with the received writings of the New Testament. This point is so important, as equalising the canonical and uncanonical gospels, that no excuse is needed for proving it by somewhat extensive extracts. The gospel opens as follows: "I, Ananias, a provincial warden, being a disciple of the law, from the divine Scriptures recognised our Lord Jesus Christ, and came to him by faith; and was also accounted worthy of holy baptism. Now, when searching the records of what was wrought in the time of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Jews laid up under Pontius Pilate, I found that these Acts were written in Hebrew, and by the good pleasure of God I translated them into Greek for the information of all who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the government of our Lord Flavius Theodosius, the 17th year, and in the 6th consulate of Flavius Valentinianus, in the 9th indiction." It may here be noted for what it is worth that Justin Martyr (1st Apology, chap. xxxv.) refers the Romans to the Acts of Pilate as public documents open to them, which is testimony far stronger than he gives to any canonical gospel. "In the 15th year of the government of Tiberius Cæsar, King of the Romans, and of Herod, King of Galilee, the 9th year of his reign, on the 8th before the calends of April, which is the 25th of March; in the consulship of Rufus and Rubellio; in the 4th year of the 202nd Olympiad, when Joseph Caiaphas was high priest of the Jews. Whatsoever, after the cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour God, Nicodemus recorded and wrote in Hebrew, and left to posterity, is after this fashion" ("Apocryphal Gospels," B. H. Cowper, pp. 229, 230). In the first chapter we learn how the Jews came to Pilate, and accuse Jesus, "that he saith he is the son of God and a king; moreover, he profaneth the Sabbaths, and wisheth to abolish the law of our fathers." After some conversation, Jesus is brought, and in chap. 2 we read the message from Pilate's wife, and "Pilate, having called the Jews, said to them, Ye know that my wife is religious, and inclined to practise Judaism with you. They said unto him, Yea, we know it. Pilate saith to them, Behold my wife hath sent to me, saying, Have nothing to do with this just man, for I have suffered very much because of him in the night. But the

Jews answered, and said to Pilate, Did we not tell thee that he is a magician? Behold, he hath sent a dream to thy wife." The trial goes on, and Pilate declares the innocence of Jesus, and then confers with him as in John xviii. 33—37. Then comes the question (chaps. iii. and iv.): "Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? Jesus saith to him, Truth is from heaven. Pilate saith, Is truth not upon earth? Jesus saith to Pilate, Thou seest how they who say the truth are judged by those who have power upon earth. And, leaving Jesus within the prætorium, Pilate went out to the Jews, and saith unto them, I find no fault in him." The conversation between Pilate and the Jews is then related more fully than in the canonical accounts, and after this follows a scene of much pathos, which is far more in accord with the rest of the tale than the accepted story, wherein the multitude are represented as crying with one voice for his death. Nicodemus (chap. v.) first rises and speaks for Jesus: "Release him, and wish no evil against him. If the miracles which he doth are of God, they will stand; but, if of men, they will come to nought.....Now, therefore, release this man, for he is not deserving of death." Then (chaps. vi., vii., and viii.): "One of the Jews, starting up, asked the governor that he might say a word. The governor saith, If thou wilt speak, speak. And the Jew said, I lay thirty-eight years on my bed in pain and affliction. And when Jesus came, many demoniacs, and persons suffering various diseases, were healed by him; and some young men had pity on me, and carried me with my bed, and took me to him; and when Jesus saw me, he had compassion, and said the word to me, Take up thy bed, and walk; and I took up my bed and walked. The Jews said to Pilate, Ask him what day it was when he was healed. He that was healed said, On the Sabbath. The Jews said, Did we not tell thee so? that on the Sabbath he healeth and casteth out demons? And another Jew, starting up, said, I was born blind; I heard a voice, but saw no person; and as Jesus passed by, I cried with a loud voice, Have pity on me, Son of David, and he had pity on me, and placed his hands upon my eyes, and immediately I saw. And another Jew, leaping up, said, I was a cripple, and he made me straight with a word. And another said, I was a leper, and he healed me with a word. And a certain woman cried out from a distance, and said, I had an issue of blood, and I touched the hem of his garment, and my issue of blood,

which had been for twelve years, was stayed. The Jews said, We have a law not to admit a woman to witness. And others, a multitude, both of men and of women, cried and said, This man is a prophet, and demons are subject unto him. Pilate said to those who said that demons were subject to him, Why were your teachers not also subject to him? They say unto Pilate, We know not. And others said, That he raised up Lazarus from the sepulchre, when he had been dead four days. And the governor, becoming afraid, said to all the multitude of the Jews, Why will ye shed innocent blood?" The story proceeds much as in the gospels, the names of the malefactors being given; and when Pilate remarks the three hours' darkness to the Jews, they answer, "An eclipse of the sun has happened in the usual manner" (chap. xi.). Chap. xiii. gives a full account of the conversation between the Jews and the Roman soldiers alluded to in Matt. xxviii. 11—15. The remaining chapters relate the proceedings of the Jews after the resurrection, and are of no special interest. There is a second Gospel of Nicodemus, varying on some points from the one quoted above, which assumes to be "compiled by a Jew, named Æneas; translated from the Hebrew tongue into the Greek, by Nicodemus, a Roman Toparch." Then we find a second part of the Gospel of Nicodemus, or "The Descent of Christ to the Under World," which relates how Jesus descended into Hades, and how he ordered Satan to be bound, and then he "blessed Adam on the forehead with the sign of the cross; and he did this also to the patriarchs, and the prophets, and martyrs, and forefathers, and took them up, and sprang up out of Hades." This story manifestly runs side by side with the tradition in 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, wherein it is stated that Jesus "went and preached unto the spirits in prison," and that preaching is placed between his death (v. 18) and his resurrection (v. 21). The saving by baptism (v. 21) is also alluded to in this connection in Nicodemus, wherein (chap. xi.) the dead are baptised. The Latin versions of the Gospels of Nicodemus vary in details from the Greek, but not more than do the four canonical. In these, as in all the apocryphal writings, there is nothing specially to distinguish them from the accepted Scriptures; improbabilities and contradictions abound in all; miracles render them all alike incredible; myriad chains of similarity bind them all to each other, necessitating either the rejection of all as fabulous,

or the acceptance of all as historical. Whether we regard external or internal evidence, we come to the same conclusion, *that there is nothing to distinguish the canonical from the uncanonical writings.*

C. *That it is not known where, when, by whom, the canonical writings were selected.* Tremendously damaging to the authenticity of the New Testament as this statement is, it is yet practically undisputed by Christian scholars. Canon Westcott says frankly: "It cannot be denied that the Canon was formed gradually. The condition of society and the internal relations of the Church presented obstacles to the immediate and absolute determination of the question, which are disregarded now, only because they have ceased to exist. The tradition which represents St. John as fixing the contents of the New Testament, betrays the spirit of a later age" (Westcott "On the Canon," p. 4). "The track, however, which we have to follow is often obscure and broken. The evidence of the earliest Christian writers is not only uncritical and casual, but is also fragmentary" (Ibid, p. 11). "From the close of the second century, the history of the Canon is simple, and its proof clear..... Before that time there is more or less difficulty in making out the details of the question..... Here, however, we are again beset with peculiar difficulties. The proof of the Canon is embarrassed both by the general characteristics of the age in which it was fixed, and by the particular form of the evidence on which it first depends. The spirit of the ancient world was essentially uncritical" (Ibid, pp. 6—8). In dealing with "the early versions of the New Testament," Westcott admits that "it is not easy to overrate the difficulties which beset any inquiry into the early versions of the New Testament" ("On the Canon," p. 231). He speaks of the "comparatively scanty materials and vague or conflicting traditions" (Ibid). The "original versions of the East and West" are carefully examined by him; the oldest is the "Peshito," in Syriac—*i.e.*, Aramæan, or Syro-Chaldaic. This must, of course, be only a translation of the Testament, if it be true that the original books were written in Greek. The time when this version was formed is unknown, and Westcott argues that "the very obscurity which hangs over its origin is a proof of its venerable age" (Ibid, p. 240); and he refers it to "the first half of the second century," while acknowledging that he does so "without conclusive authority" (Ibid). The Peshito

omits the second and third epistles of John, second of Peter, that of Jude, and the Apocalypse. The origin of the Western version, in Latin, is quite as obscure as that of the Syriac; and it is also incomplete, compared with the present Canon, omitting the epistle of James and the second of Peter (Ibid, p. 254). All the evidence so laboriously gathered together by the learned Canon proves our proposition to demonstration. But, it is admitted on all hands, that "it is impossible to assign any certain time when a collection of these books, either by the Apostles, or by any council of inspired or learned men, near their time, was made.....The matter is too certain to need much to be said of it" (Jones "On the Canon," vol. 1, p. 7). Jones adds that he hopes to confute "these specious objections.....in the fourth part of this book," in which he endeavours to prove the Gospels and Acts to be *genuine*, so that it does not much matter when they were collected together. In the time of Eusebius the Canon was still unsettled, as he ranks among the disputed and spurious works, the epistles of James and Jude, second of Peter, second and third of John, and the Apocalypse ("Eccles. Hist.," bk. iii., chap. 25). It is not necessary to offer any further proof in support of our position, *that it is not known where, when, by whom, the canonical writings were selected.*

D. *That before about A.D. 180 there is no trace of FOUR gospels among the Christians.* The first step we take in attacking the four canonical gospels, apart from the writings of the New Testament as a whole, is to show that there was no "sacred quaternion" spoken of before about A.D. 180, *i.e.*, the supposed time of Irenæus. Irenæus is said to have been a bishop of Lyons towards the close of the second century; we find him mentioned in the letter sent by the Churches of Vienne and Lyons to "brethren in Asia and Phrygia," as "our brother and companion Irenæus," and as a presbyter much esteemed by them ("Eccles. Hist." bk. v., chs. 1, 4). This letter relates a persecution which occurred in "the 17th year of the reign of the Emperor Antoninus Verus," *i.e.*, A.D. 177. Paley dates the letter about A.D. 170, but as it relates the persecution of A.D. 177, it is difficult to see how it could be written about seven years before the persecution took place. In that persecution Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, is said to have been slain; he was succeeded by Irenæus (Ibid bk. v., ch. 5),

who, therefore, could not possibly have been bishop before A.D. 177, while he ought probably to be put a year or two later, since time is needed, after the persecution, to send the account of it to Asia by the hands of Irenæus, and he must be supposed to have returned and to have settled down in Lyons before he wrote his voluminous works; A.D. 180 is, therefore, an almost impossibly early date, but it is, at any rate, the very earliest that can be pretended for the testimony now to be examined. The works against heresies were probably written, the first three about A.D. 190, and the remainder about A.D. 198. Irenæus is the first Christian writer who mentions *four* Gospels; he says:—“Matthew produced his Gospel, written among the Hebrews, in their own dialect, whilst Peter and Paul proclaimed the Gospel and founded the church at Rome. After the departure of these, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also transmitted to us in writing what had been preached by him. And Luke, the companion of Paul, committed to writing the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards John, the disciple of our Lord, the same that lay upon his bosom, also published the Gospel, whilst he was yet at Ephesus in Asia” (Quoted by Eusebius, bk. v., ch. 8, from 3rd bk. of “Refutation and Overthrow of False Doctrine,” by Irenæus).

The reasons which compelled Irenæus to believe that there must be neither less nor more than four Gospels in the Church are so convincing that they deserve to be here put on record. “It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones [sometimes translated “corners” or “quarters”] of the world in which we live, and four Catholic spirits, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the pillar and grounding of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life; it is fitting she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh. From which fact it is evident that the Word, the Artificer of all, He that sitteth upon the Cherubim, and contains all things, He who was manifested to men, has given us the Gospel under four aspects, but bound together by one Spirit.....For the Cherubim too were four-faced, and their faces were images of the dispensation of the Son of God.....And, therefore, the Gospels are in accord with these things, among which Christ Jesus is seated” (“Irenæus,” bk. iii., chap. xi., sec. 8).

The Rev. Dr. Giles, writing on Justin Martyr, the great Christian apologist, candidly says: "The very names of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are never mentioned by him—do not occur once in all his works. It is, therefore, childish to say that he has quoted from our existing Gospels, and so proves their existence, as they now are, in his own time.....He has nowhere remarked, like those Fathers of the Church who lived several ages after him, that there are *four* Gospels of higher importance and estimation than any others.....All this was the creation of a later age, but it is wanting in Justin Martyr, and the defect leads us to the conclusion that our four Gospels had not then emerged from obscurity, but were still, if in being, confounded with a larger mass of Christian traditions which, about this very time, were beginning to be set down in writing" ("Christian Records," pp. 71, 72).

Had these four Gospels emerged before A.D. 180, we should most certainly find some mention of them in the Mishna. "The Mishna, a collection of Jewish traditions compiled about the year 180, takes no notice of Christianity, though it contains a chapter headed 'De Cultu Peregrino, 'of strange worship.' This omission is thought by Dr. Paley to prove nothing, for, says he, 'it cannot be disputed but that Christianity was perfectly well known to the world at this time.' It cannot, certainly, be disputed that Christianity was *beginning* to be known to the world, but whether it had yet emerged from the lower classes of persons among whom it originated, may well be doubted. It is a prevailing error, in biblical criticism, to suppose that the whole world was feelingly alive to what was going on in small and obscure parts of it. The existence of Christians was probably known to the compilers of the Mishna in 180, even though they did not deign to notice them, but they could not have had any knowledge of the New Testament, or they would undoubtedly have noticed it; if, at least, we are right in ascribing to it so high a character, attracting (as we know it does) the admiration of every one in every country to which it is carried" (Ibid, p. 35).

There is, however, one alleged proof of the existence of four, and only four, Gospels, put forward by Paley:—"Tatian, a follower of Justin Martyr, and who flourished about the year 170, composed a harmony or collection of the Gospels, which he called Diatessaron, of the Four. This title, as well as the work, is remarkable, because it

shows that then, as now, there were four, and only four, Gospels in general use with Christians" ("Evidences," pp. 154, 155). Paley does not state, until later, that the "follower of Justin Martyr" turned heretic and joined the Encratites, an ascetic and mystic sect who taught abstinence from marriage, and from meat, etc.; nor does he tell us how doubtful it is what the Diatessaron—now lost—really contained. He blandly assures us that it is a harmony of the four Gospels, although all the evidence is against him. Irenæus, as quoted by Eusebius, says of Tatian that "having apostatised from the Church, and being elated with the conceit of a teacher, and vainly puffed up as if he surpassed all others," he invented some new doctrines, and Eusebius further tells us: "Their chief and founder, Tatianus, having formed a certain body and collection of Gospels, I know not how, has given this the title Diatessaron, that is the Gospel by the four, or the Gospel formed of the four" ("Eccles. Hist," bk. iv., ch. 29). Could Eusebius have written that Tatian formed this, *I know not how*, if it had been a harmony of the Gospels recognised by the Church when he wrote? and how is it that Paley knows all about it, though Eusebius did not? And still further, after mentioning the Diatessaron, Eusebius says *of another of Tatian's books*: "This book, indeed, appears to be the most elegant and profitable of all his works" (Ibid). More profitable than a harmony of the four Gospels! So far as the name goes, as given by Eusebius, it would seem to imply one Gospel written by four authors. Epiphanius states: "Tatian is said to have composed the Gospel by four, which is called by some, the Gospel according to the Hebrews" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. ii., p. 155). Here we get the Diatessaron identified with the widely-spread and popular early Gospel of the Hebrews. Theodoret (circa A.D. 457) says that he found more than 200 such books in use in Syria, the Christians not perceiving "the evil design of the composition;" and this is Paley's harmony of the Gospels! Theodoret states that he took these books away, "and instead introduced the Gospels of the four Evangelists;" how strange an action in dealing with so useful a work as a harmony of the Gospels, to confiscate it entirely and call it an evil design! To complete the value of this work as evidence to "four, and only four, Gospels," we are told by Victor of Capua, that it was also called Diapente, *i.e.*, "by five" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. ii.,

p. 153). In fact, there is no possible reason for calling the work—whose contents are utterly unknown—a *harmony* of the Gospels at all; the notion that it is a harmony is the purest of assumptions. There is some slight evidence in favour of the identity of the Diatessaron with the Gospel of the Hebrews. “Those, however, who called the Gospel used by Tatian the Gospel according to the Hebrews, must have read the work, and all that we know confirms their conclusion. The work was, in point of fact, found in wide circulation precisely in the places in which, earlier, the Gospel according to the Hebrews was more particularly current. The singular fact that the earliest reference to Tatian’s ‘harmony’ is made a century and a half after its supposed composition, that no writer before the 5th century had seen the work itself, indeed, that only two writers before that period mention it at all, receives its natural explanation in the conclusion that Tatian did not actually compose any harmony at all, but simply made use of the same Gospel as his master Justin Martyr, namely, the Gospel according to the Hebrews, by which name his Gospel had been called by those best informed” (“Sup. Rel.,” vol. ii., pp. 158, 159). As it is not pretended by any that there is any mention of *four* Gospels before the time of Irenæus, excepting this “harmony,” pleaded by some as dated about A.D. 170, and by others as between 170 and 180, it would be sheer waste of time and space to prove further a point admitted on all hands. This step of our argument is, then, on solid and unassailable ground—that *before about A.D. 180 there is no trace of FOUR Gospels among the Christians.*

E. *That, before that date, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are not selected as the four evangelists.* This position necessarily follows from the preceding one, since four evangelists could not be selected until four Gospels were recognised. Here, again, Dr. Giles supports the argument we are building up. He says: “Justin Martyr never once mentions by name the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This circumstance is of great importance; for those who assert that our four canonical Gospels are contemporary records of our Saviour’s ministry, ascribe them to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and to no other writers. In this they are, in a certain sense, consistent; for contemporary writings [? histories] are very rarely anonymous. If so, how could they be proved to be contemporary? Justin

Martyr, it must be remembered, wrote in 150 ; but neither he, nor any writer before him, has alluded, in the most remote degree, to four specific Gospels, bearing the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Let those who think differently produce the passages in which such mention is to be found " (" Christian Records," Rev. Dr. Giles, p. 73). Two of these names had, however, emerged a little earlier, being mentioned as evangelists by Papias, of Hierapolis. His testimony will be fully considered below in establishing position *g*.

F. *That there is no evidence that the four Gospels mentioned about that date were the same as those we have now.* This brings us to a most important point in our examination ; for we now attack the very key of the Christian position—viz, that, although the Gospels be not mentioned by name previous to Irenæus, their existence can yet be conclusively proved by quotations from them, to be found in the writings of the Fathers who lived before Irenæus. Paley says : "The historical books of the New Testament—meaning thereby the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles—are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of Christian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the Apostles or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present." And he urges that "the medium of proof stated in this proposition is, of all others, the most unquestionable, the least liable to any practices of fraud, and is not diminished by the lapse of ages" ("Evidences," pp. 111, 112). The writers brought in evidence are : Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Justin Martyr, Hegesippus, and the epistle from Lyons and Vienne. Before examining the supposed quotations in as great detail as our space will allow, two or three preliminary remarks are needed on the value of this offered evidence as a whole.

In the first place, the greater part of the works brought forward as witnesses are themselves challenged, and their own dates are unknown ; their now accepted writings are only the residuum of a mass of forgeries, and Dr. Giles justly says : "The process of elimination, which gradually reduced the so-called writings of the first century from two folio volumes to fifty slender pages, would, in the case of any other profane works, have prepared the inquirer for casting from him, with disgust, the small remnant, even if not fully convicted of spuriousness ; for there is no other

case in record of so wide a disproportion between what is genuine and what is spurious" (Christian Records," p. 67). Their testimony is absolutely worthless until they are themselves substantiated; and from the account given of them above (pp 214—221, and 232—235), the student is in a position to judge of the value of evidence depending on the Apostolic Fathers. Professor Norton remarks: "When we endeavour to strengthen this evidence by appealing to the writings ascribed to Apostolical Fathers, we, in fact, weaken its force. At the very extremity of the chain of evidence, where it ought to be strongest, we are attaching defective links, which will bear no weight" ("Genuineness of the Gospels," vol. i., p. 357). Again, supposing that we admit these witnesses, their repetition of sayings of Christ, or references to his life, do not—in the absence of quotations specified by them as taken from Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—prove that, because similar sayings or actions are recorded in the present canonical Gospels, therefore, these latter existed in their days, and were in their hands. Lardner says on this point: "Here is, however, one difficulty, and 'tis a difficulty which may frequently occur, whilst we are considering these very early writers, who were conversant with the Apostles, and others who had seen or heard our Lord; and were, in a manner, as well acquainted with our Saviour's doctrine and history as the Evangelists themselves, unless their quotations or allusions are very express and clear. The question, then, here is, whether Clement in these places refers to words of Christ, written and recorded, or whether he reminds the Corinthians of words of Christ, which he and they might have heard from the Apostles, or other eye-and-ear-witnesses of our Lord. Le Clerc, in his dissertation on the four Gospels, is of opinion that Clement refers to written words of our Lord, which were in the hands of the Corinthians, and well known to them. On the other hand, I find, Bishop Pearson thought, that Clement speaks of words which he had heard from the Apostles themselves, or their disciples.— I certainly make no question but the three first Gospels were writ before this time. And I am well satisfied that Clement might refer to our written Gospels, though he does not exactly agree with them in expression. But whether he does refer to them is not easy to determine concerning a man who, very probably, knew these things before they were committed to writing; and, even after

they were so, might continue to speak of them, in the same manner he had been wont to do, as things he was well informed of, without appealing to the Scriptures themselves" ("Credibility," pt. II., vol. i., pp. 68—70). Canon Westcott, after arguing that the Apostolic Fathers are much influenced by the Pauline Epistles, goes on to remark: "Nothing has been said hitherto of the coincidences between the Apostolic Fathers and the Canonical Gospels. From the nature of the case, casual coincidences of language cannot be brought forward in the same manner to prove the use of a history as of a letter. The same facts and words, especially if they be recent and striking, may be preserved in several narratives. References in the sub-apostolic age to the discourses or actions of our Lord, as we find them recorded in the Gospels, show, as far as they go, that what the Gospels relate was then held to be true; but it does not necessarily follow that they were already in use, and were the actual source of the passages in question. On the contrary, the mode in which Clement refers to our Lord's teaching—'the Lord said,' not 'saith'—seems to imply that he was indebted to tradition, and not to any written accounts, for words most closely resembling those which are still found in our Gospels. The main testimony of the Apostolic Fathers is, therefore, to the substance, and not to the authenticity, of the Gospels" ("On the Canon," pp. 51, 52). An examination of the Apostolic Fathers gives us little testimony as to "the substance of the Gospels;" but the whole passage is here given to show how much Canon Westcott, writing in defence of the Canon, finds himself obliged to give up of the position occupied by earlier apologists. Dr. Giles agrees with the justice of these remarks of Lardner and Westcott. He writes: "The sayings of Christ were, no doubt, treasured up like household jewels by his disciples and followers. Why, then, may we not refer the quotation of Christ's words, occurring in the Apostolical Fathers, to an origin of this kind? If we examine a few of those quotations, the supposition, just stated, will expand into reality.....The same may be said of every single sentence found in any of the Apostolical Fathers, which, on first sight, might be thought to be a decided quotation from one of the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. It is impossible to deny the truth of this observation; for we see it confirmed by the fact that the Apostolical Fathers do actually quote Moses,

and other old Testament writers, by name—‘Moses hath said,’ ‘but Moses says,’ etc.—in numerous passages. But we nowhere meet with the words, ‘Matthew hath said in his Gospel,’ ‘John hath said,’ etc. They always quote, not the words of the Evangelists, but the words of Christ himself directly, which furnishes the strongest presumption that, though the sayings of Christ were in general vogue, yet the evangelical histories, into which they were afterwards embodied, were not then in being. But the converse of this view of the case leads us to the same conclusion. The Apostolical Fathers quote sayings of Christ which are not found in our Gospels.....There is no proof that our New Testament was in existence during the lives of the Apostolical Fathers, who, therefore, could not make citations out of books which they had never seen” (“Christian Records,” pp. 51—53). “There is no evidence that they [the four Gospels] existed earlier than the middle of the second century, for they are not named by any writer who lived before that time” (Ibid, p. 56). In searching for evidence of the existence of the Gospels during the earlier period of the Church’s history, Christian apologists have hitherto been content to seize upon a phrase here and there somewhat resembling a phrase in the canonical Gospels, and to put that forward as a proof that the Gospels then were the same as those we have now. This rough-and-ready plan must now be given up, since the most learned Christian writers now agree, with the Freethinkers, that such a method is thoroughly unsatisfactory.

Yet, again, admitting these writers as witnesses, and allowing that they quote from the same Gospels, their quotations only prove that the isolated phrases they use were in the Gospels of their day, and are also in the present ones; and many such cases might occur in spite of great variations in the remainder of the respective Gospels, and would by no means prove that the Gospels they used were identical with ours. If Josephus, for instance, had ever quoted some sentences of Socrates recorded by Plato, that quotation, supposing that Josephus were reliable, would prove that Plato and Socrates both lived before Josephus, and that Plato wrote down some of the sayings of Socrates; but it would not prove that a version of Plato in our hands to-day was identical with that used by Josephus. The scattered and isolated passages woven in by the Fathers in their works would fail to prove the identity of the Gospels of the

second century with those of the nineteenth, even were they as like parallel passages in the canonical Gospels as they are unlike them.

It is "important," says the able anonymous writer of "Supernatural Religion," "that we should constantly bear in mind that a great number of Gospels existed in the early Church which are no longer extant, and of most of which even the names are lost. We will not here do more than refer, in corroboration of this fact, to the preliminary statement of the author of the third Gospel: 'Forasmuch as many (*πολλοι*) have taken in hand to set forth a declaration of those things which are surely believed among us, etc.' It is, therefore, evident that before our third synoptic was written, many similar works were already in circulation. Looking at the close similarity of the large portions of the three synoptics, it is almost certain that many of the *πολλοι* here mentioned bore a close analogy to each other, and to our Gospels; and this is known to have been the case, for instance, amongst the various forms of the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews,' distinct mention of which we meet with long before we hear anything of our Gospels. When, therefore, in early writings, we meet with quotations closely resembling, or, we may add, even identical with passages which are found in our Gospels—the source of which, however, is not mentioned, nor is any author's name indicated—the similarity, or even identity, cannot by any means be admitted as evidence that the quotation is necessarily from our Gospels, and not from some other similar work now no longer extant; and more especially not when, in the same writings, there are other quotations from apocryphal sources different from our Gospels. Whether regarded as historical records or as writings embodying the mere tradition of the early Christians, our Gospels cannot for a moment be recognised as the exclusive depositaries of the genuine sayings and doings of Jesus; and so far from the common possession by many works in early times of such words of Jesus, in closely similar form, being either strange or improbable, the really remarkable phenomena is that such material variation in the report of the more important historical teaching should exist amongst them. But whilst similarity to our Gospels in passages quoted by early writers from unnamed sources cannot prove the use of our Gospels, variation from them would suggest or prove a different origin; and, at least, it is obvious that quotations which do

not agree with our Gospels cannot, in any case, indicate their existence" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. i., pp. 217—219).

We will now turn to the witness of Paley's Apostolic Fathers, bearing always in mind the utter worthlessness of their testimony; worthless as it is, however, it is the only evidence Christians have to bring forward to prove the identity of their Gospels with those [supposed to have been] written in the first century. Let us listen to the opinion given by Bishop Marsh: "From the Epistle of Barnabas, no inference can be deduced that he had read any part of the New Testament. From the genuine epistle, as it is called, of Clement of Rome, it may be inferred that Clement had read the first Epistle to the Corinthians. From the Shepherd of Hermas no inference whatsoever can be drawn. From the Epistles of Ignatius, it may be concluded that he had read St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, and that there existed in his time evangelical writings, though it cannot be shown that he has quoted from them. From Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians, it appears that he had heard of St. Paul's Epistle to that community, and he quotes a passage which is in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and another which is in the Epistle to the Ephesians; but no positive conclusion can be drawn with respect to any other epistle, or any of the four Gospels" (Marsh's "Michaelis," vol. i., p. 354, as quoted in Norton's "Genuineness of the Gospels," vol. i., p. 3). Very heavily does this tell against the authenticity of these records, for "if the four Gospels and other books were written by those who had been eye-witnesses of Christ's miracles, and the five Apostolic Fathers had conversed with the Apostles, it is not to be conceived that they would not have named the actual books themselves which possessed so high authority, and would be looked up to with so much respect by all the Christians. This is the only way in which their evidence could be of use to support the authenticity of the New Testament as being the work of the Apostles; but this is a testimony which the five Apostolical Fathers fail to supply. There is not a single sentence, in all their remaining works, in which a clear allusion to the New Testament is to be found" ("Christian Records," Rev. Dr. Giles, p. 50).

Westcott, while claiming in the Apostolic Fathers a knowledge of most of the epistles, writes very doubtfully as to their knowledge of the Gospels (see above p. 264), and

after giving careful citations of all possible quotations, he sums up thus : " 1. No evangelic reference in the Apostolic Fathers can be referred certainly to a written record. 2. It appears most probable from the form of the quotations that they were derived from oral tradition. 3. No quotation contains any element which is not substantially preserved in our Gospels. 4. When the text given differs from the text of our Gospels it represents a later form of the evangelic tradition. 5. The text of St. Matthew corresponds more nearly than the other synoptic texts with the quotations and references as a whole " ("On the Canon," p. 62). There appears to be no proof whatever of conclusions 3 and 4, but we give them all as they stand. But we will take these Apostolic Fathers one by one, in the order used by Paley.

BARNABAS. We have already quoted Bishop Marsh and Dr. Giles as regards him. There is "nothing in this epistle worthy of the name of evidence even of the existence of our Gospels" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. i., p. 260). The quotation sometimes urged, "There are many called, few chosen," is spoken of by Westcott as a "proverbial phrase," and phrases similar in meaning and manner may be found in iv. Ezra, viii. 3, ix. 15 ("Sup. Rel.," vol. i., p. 245); in the latter work the words occur in a relation similar to that in which we find them in Barnabas; in both the judgment is described, and in both the moral drawn is that there are many lost and few saved; it is the more likely that the quotation is taken from the apocryphal work, since many other quotations are drawn from it throughout the epistle. The quotation "Give to every one that asketh thee," is not found in the supposed oldest MS., the Codex Sinaiticus, and is a later interpolation, clearly written in by some transcriber as appropriate to the passage in Barnabas. The last supposed quotation, that Christ chose men of bad character to be his disciples, that "he might show that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners," is another clearly later interpolation, for it jars with the reasoning of Barnabas, and when Origen quotes the passage he omits the phrase. In a work which "has been written at the request, and is published at the cost of the Christian Evidence Society," and which may fairly, therefore, be taken as the opinion of learned, yet most orthodox, Christian opinion, the Rev. Mr. Sanday writes: "The general result of our examination of the Epistle of Barnabas may, perhaps, be

stated thus, that while not supplying by itself certain and conclusive proof of the use of our Gospels, still the phenomena accord better with the hypothesis of such a use. This epistle stands in the second line of the Evidence, and as a witness is rather confirmatory than principal" ("Gospels in the Second Century," p. 76. Ed. 1876). And this is all that the most modern apologetic criticism can draw from an epistle of which Paley makes a great display, saying that "if the passage remarked in this ancient writing had been found in one of St. Paul's Epistles, it would have been esteemed by every one a high testimony to St. Matthew's Gospel" ("Evidences," p. 113).

CLEMENT OF ROME.—"Tischendorf, who is ever ready to claim the slightest resemblance in language as a reference to new Testament writings, admits that although this Epistle is rich in quotations from the Old Testament, and here and there that Clement also makes use of passages from Pauline Epistles, he nowhere refers to the Gospels" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. i. pp. 227, 228). The Christian Evidence Society, through Mr. Sanday, thus criticises Clement: "Now what is the bearing of the Epistle of Clement upon the question of the currency and authority of the Synoptic Gospels? There are two passages of some length which are, without doubt, evangelical quotations, though whether they are derived from the Canonical Gospels or not may be doubted" ("Gospels in the Second Century," page 61). After balancing the arguments for and against the first of these passages, Mr. Sanday concludes: "Looking at the arguments on both sides, so far as we can give them, I incline, on the whole, to the opinion that Clement is not quoting from our Gospels; but I am quite aware of the insecure ground on which this opinion rests. It is a nice balance of probabilities, and the element of ignorance is so large that the conclusion, whatever it is, must be purely provisional. Anything like confident dogmatism on the subject seems to me entirely out of place. Very much the same is to be said of the second passage" (Ibid, p. 66).

The quotations in Clement, apparently from some other evangelic work, will be noted under head *h*, and these are those cited in Paley.

HERMAS.—Tischendorf relinquishes this work also as evidence for the Gospels. Lardner writes: "In *Hermas* are no express citations of any books of the New Testament" ("Credibility," vol. i. pt. 2, p. 116). He thinks, however, that he

can trace "allusions to" "words of Scripture." Westcott says that "The *Shepherd* contains no definite quotation from either Old or New Testament" ("On the Canon," p. 197); but he also thinks that Hermas was "familiar with" some records of "Christ's teaching." Westcott, however, does not admit Hermas as an Apostolic Father at all, but places him in the middle of the second century. "As regards the direct historical evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels, it is of no importance. No book is cited in it by name. There are no evident quotations from the Gospels" (Norton's "Genuineness of the Gospels," vol. i., pp. 342, 343).

IGNATIUS.—It would be wasted time to trouble about Ignatius at all, after knowing the vicissitudes through which his supposed works have passed (see ante pp. 217—220); and Paley's references are such vague "quotations" that they may safely be left to the judgment of the reader. Tischendorf, claiming two and three phrases in it, says somewhat confusedly: "Though we do not wish to give to these references a decisive value, and though they do not exclude all doubt as to their applicability to our Gospels, and more particularly to that of St. John, they nevertheless undoubtedly bear traces of such a reference" ("When were our Gospels Written," p. 61, Eng. ed.). This conclusion refers, in Tischendorf, to Polycarp, as well as to Ignatius. In these Ignatian Epistles, Mr. Sanday only treats the Curetonian Epistles (see ante, p. 218) as genuine, and in these he finds scarcely any coincidences with the Gospels. The parallel to Matthew x. 16, "Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents and harmless as doves," is doubtful, as it is possible "that Ignatius may be quoting, not directly from our Gospel, but from one of the original documents (such as Ewald's hypothetical 'Spruch-Sammlung'), out of which our Gospel was composed" ("Gospels in the Second Century," p. 78). An allusion to the "star" of Bethlehem may have, "as it appears to have, reference to the narrative of Matt. ii..... [but see, ante, p. 233, where the account given of the star is widely different from the evangelic notice]. These are (so far as I am aware) the only coincidences to be found in the Curetonian version" (Ibid, pp. 78, 79).

POLYCARP.—This epistle lies under a heavy weight of suspicion, and has besides little worth analysing as possible quotations from the Gospels. Paley quotes, "beseeking the all-seeing God not to lead us into temptation." Why not finish the passage? Because, if he had done so, the con-

text would have shown that it was not a quotation from a gospel identical with our own—"beseeching the all-seeing God not to lead us into temptation, as the Lord hath said, The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." If this be a quotation at all, it is from some lost gospel, as these words are nowhere found thus conjoined in the Synoptics.

Thus briefly may these Apostolic Fathers be dismissed, since their testimony fades away as soon as it is examined, as a mist evaporates before the rays of the rising sun. We will call up Paley's other witnesses.

PAPIAS.—In the fragment preserved by Eusebius there is no quotation of any kind; the testimony of Papias is to the names of the authors of two of the Gospels, and will be considered under *g*.

JUSTIN MARTYR.—We now come to the most important of the supposed witnesses, and, although students must study the details of the controversy in larger works, we will endeavour to put briefly before them the main reasons why Freethinkers reject Justin Martyr as bearing evidence to the authenticity of the present Gospels, and in this *résumé* we begin by condensing chapter iii. of "Supernatural Religion, vol. i., pp. 288—433, so far as it bears on our present position. Justin Martyr is supposed to have died about A.D. 166, having been put to death in the reign of Marcus Aurelius; he was by descent a Greek, but became a convert to Christianity, strongly tinged with Judaism. The longer Apology, and the Dialogue with Trypho, are the works chiefly relied upon to prove the authenticity. The date of the first Apology is probably about A.D. 147; the Dialogue was written later, perhaps between A.D. 150 and 160. In these writings Justin quotes very copiously from the Old Testament, and he also very frequently refers to facts of Christian history, and to sayings of Jesus. Of these references, for instance, some fifty occur in the first Apology, and upwards of seventy in the Dialogue with Trypho; a goodly number, it will be admitted, by means of which to identify the source from which he quotes. Justin himself frequently and distinctly says that his information and quotations are derived from the "Memoirs of the Apostles," but, except upon one occasion, which we shall hereafter consider, when he indicates Peter, he never mentions an author's name. Upon examination it is found that, with only one or two brief exceptions, the numerous quotations from these "Memoirs" differ more or less

widely from parallel passages in our Synoptic Gospels, and in many cases differ in the same respects as similar quotations found in other writings of the second century, the writers of which are known to have made use of uncanonical Gospels; and further, that these passages are quoted several times, at intervals, by Justin, with the same variations. Moreover, sayings of Jesus are quoted from the "Memoirs" which are not found in our Gospels at all, and facts in the life of Jesus, and circumstances of Christian history, derived from the same source, not only are not found in our Gospels, but are in contradiction with them. Various theories have been put forward by Christian apologists to lessen the force of these objections. It has been suggested that Justin quoted from memory, condensed or combined to suit his immediate purpose; that the "Memoirs" were a harmony of the Gospels, with additions from some apocryphal work; that along with our Gospels Justin used apocryphal Gospels; that he made use of our Gospels, preferring, however, to rely chiefly on an apocryphal one. Results so diverse show how dubious must be the value of the witness of Justin Martyr. Competent critics almost universally admit that Justin had no idea of ranking the "Memoirs of the Apostles" among canonical writings. The word translated "Memoirs" would be more correctly rendered "Recollections," or "Memorabilia," and none of these three terms is an appropriate title for works ranking as canonical Gospels. Great numbers of spurious writings, under the names of apostles, were current in the early Church, and Justin names no authors for the "Recollections" he quotes from, only saying that they were composed "by his Apostles and their followers," clearly indicating that he was using some collective recollections of the Apostles and those who followed them. The word "Gospels," in the plural, is only once applied to these "Recollections;" "For the Apostles, in the 'Memoirs' composed by them, which are called Gospels." "The last expression *α καλειται ευαγγελαι*, as many scholars have declared, is a manifest interpolation. It is, in all probability, a gloss on the margin of some old MS. which some copyist afterwards inserted in the text. If Justin really stated that the "Memoirs" were called Gospels, it seems incomprehensible that he should never call them so himself. In no other place in his writings does he apply the plural to them, but, on the contrary, we find Trypho

referring to the 'so-called Gospel,' which he states that he had carefully read, and which, of course, can only be Justin's 'Memoirs,' and again, in another part of the same dialogue, Justin quotes passages which are written 'in the Gospel.' The term 'Gospel' is nowhere else used by Justin in reference to a written record." The public reading of the Recollections, mentioned by Justin, proves nothing, since many works, now acknowledged as spurious, were thus read (see ante, pp. 248, 249). Justin does not regard the Recollections as inspired, attributing inspiration only to prophetic writings, and he accepts them as authentic solely because the events they narrate are prophesied of in the Old Testament. The omission of any author's name is remarkable, since, in quoting from the Old Testament, he constantly refers to the author by name, or to the book used; but in the very numerous quotations, supposed to be from the Gospels, he never does this, save in one single instance, mentioned below, when he quotes Peter. On the theory that he had our four Gospels before him, this is the more singular, since he would naturally have distinguished one from the other. The only writing in the New Testament referred to by name is the Apocalypse, by "a certain man whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ," and it is impossible that John should be thus mentioned, if Justin had already been quoting from a Gospel bearing his name under the general title of Recollections. Justin clearly quotes from a *written* source and excludes oral tradition, saying that in the Recollections is recorded "*everything* that concerns our Saviour Christ." (The proofs that Justin quotes from records other than the Gospels will be classed under position *h*, and are here omitted.) Justin knows nothing of the shepherds of the plain, and the angelic appearance to them, nor of the star guiding the wise men to the place where Jesus was, although he relates the story of the birth, and the visit of the wise men. Two short passages in Justin are identical with parallel passages in Matthew, but "it cannot be too often repeated, that the mere coincidence of short historical sayings in two works by no means warrants the conclusion that the one is dependent on the other." In the first Apology, chaps. xv., xvi., and xvii. are composed almost entirely of examples of Christ's teaching, and with the exception of these two brief passages, not one quotation agrees verbally with the canonical Gospels. We have referred to

one instance wherein the name of Peter is mentioned in connection with the Recollections. Justin says: "The statement also that he (Jesus) changed the name of Peter, one of the Apostles, and that this is also written in *his* 'Memoirs,'" etc. This refers the "Memoirs" to Peter, and it is suggested that it is, therefore, a reference to the Gospel of Mark, Mark having been supposed to have written his Gospel under the direction of Peter. There was a "Gospel according to Peter" current in the early Church, probably a variation from the Gospel of the Hebrews, so highly respected and so widely used by the primitive writers. It is very probable that this is the work to which Justin so often refers, and that it originally bore the simple title of "The Gospel," or the "Recollections of Peter." A version of this Gospel was also known as the "Gospel According to the Apostles," a title singularly like the "Recollections of the Apostles" by Justin. Seeing that in Justin's works his quotations, although so copious, do not agree with parallel passages in our Gospels, we may reasonably conclude that "there is no evidence that he made use of any of our Gospels, and he cannot, therefore, even be cited to prove their very existence, and much less the authenticity and character of records whose authors he does not once name." Passing from this case, ably worked out by this learned and clever writer (and we earnestly recommend our readers, if possible, to study his careful analysis for themselves, since he makes the whole question thoroughly intelligible to *English* readers, and gives them evidence whereby they can form their own judgments, instead of accepting ready-made conclusions), we will examine Canon Westcott's contention. He admits that the difficulties perplexing the evidence of Justin are "great;" that there are "additions to the received narrative, and remarkable variations from its text, which, in some cases, are both repeated by Justin and found also in other writings" ("On the Canon," p. 98). We regret to say that Dr. Westcott, in laying the case before his readers, somewhat misleads them, although, doubtless, unintentionally. He speaks of Justin telling us that "Christ was descended from Abraham through Jacob, Judah, Phares, Jesse, and David," and omits the fact that Justin traces the descent to Mary alone, and knows nothing as to a descent traced to Joseph, as in both Matthew and Luke (see below, under *h*). He speaks of Justin mentioning wise men "guided by a star," forgetting that Justin says nothing of the guid-

ance, but only writes : "That he should arise like a star from the seed of Abraham, Moses showed beforehand..... Accordingly, when a star rose in heaven at the time of his birth, as is recorded in the "Memoirs" of his Apostles, the Magi from Arabia, recognising the sign by this, came and worshipped him" ("Dial.," ch. cvi.). He speaks of Justin recording "the singing of the Psalm afterwards" (after the last supper), omitting that Justin only says generally (Dial.," ch. cvi., to which Dr. Westcott refers us) that "when living with them (Christ) sang praises to God." But as we hereafter deal with these discrepancies, we need not dwell on them now, only warning our readers that since even such a man as Dr. Westcott thus misrepresents facts, it will be well never to accept any inferences drawn from such references as these without comparing them with the original. One of the chief difficulties to the English reader is to get a reliable translation. To give but a single instance. In the version of Justin here used (that published by T. Clark, Edinburgh), we find in the "Dialogue," ch. ciii., the following passage : "His sweat fell down like drops of blood while he was praying." And this is referred to by Canon Westcott (p. 104) as a record of the "bloody sweat." Yet, in the original, there is no word analogous to "of blood ;" the passage runs : "sweat as drops fell down," and it is recorded by Justin as a proof that the prophecy, "my bones are poured out *like water*," was fulfilled in Christ. The clumsy endeavour to create a likeness to Luke xxii. 44 destroys Justin's argument. Further on (p. 113) Dr. Westcott admits that the words "of blood" are not found in Justin ; but it is surely misleading, under these circumstances, to say that Justin mentions "the bloody sweat." Westcott only maintains seven passages in the whole of Justin's writings, wherein he distinctly quotes from the "Memoirs ;" *i.e.*, only seven that can be maintained as quotations from the canonical Gospels—the contention being that the "Memoirs" *are* the Gospels. He says truly, if naïvely, "The result of a first view of these passages is striking." Very striking, indeed ; for, "of the seven, five agree verbally with the text of St. Matthew or St. Luke, *exhibiting, indeed, three slight various readings not elsewhere found*, but such as are easily explicable. The sixth is a condensed summary of words related by St. Matthew ; the seventh alone presents an important variation in the text of a verse, which is, however, otherwise very uncertain" (pp. 130, 131. The italics are our own). That

is, there are only seven distinct quotations, and all of these, save two, are different from our Gospels. The whole of Dr. Westcott's analysis of these passages is severely criticised in "Supernatural Religion," and in the edition of 1875 of Dr. Westcott's book, from which we quote, some of the expressions he previously used are a little modified. The author of "Supernatural Religion" justly says: "The striking result, to summarise Canon Westcott's own words, is this. Out of seven professed quotations from the 'Memoirs,' in which he admits we may expect to find the exact language preserved, five present three variations; one is a compressed summary, and does not agree verbally at all; and the seventh presents an important variation" (vol. i., p. 394).

Dr. Giles speaks very strongly against Paley's distortion of Justin Martyr's testimony, complaining: "The works of Justin Martyr do not fall in the way of one in a hundred thousand of our countrymen. How is it, then, to be deprecated that erroneous statements should be current about him! How is it to be censured that his testimony should be changed, and he should be made to speak a falsehood?" ("Christian Records," p. 71). Dr. Giles then argues that Justin would have certainly named the books and their authors had they been current and revered in his time; that there were numberless Gospels current at that date; that Justin mentions occurrences that are only found related in such apocryphal Gospels. He then compares seventeen passages in Justin Martyr with parallel passages in the Gospels, and concludes that Justin "gives us Christ's sayings in their traditionary forms, and not in the words which are found in our four Gospels." We will select two, to show his method of criticising, translating the Greek, instead of giving it, as he does, in the original. In the Apology, ch. xv., Justin writes: "If thy right eye offend thee, cut it out, for it is profitable for thee to enter into the kingdom of heaven with one eye, than having two to be thrust into the everlasting fire." "This passage is very like Matt. v. 29: 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.' But it is also like Matt. xviii. 9: 'And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.' And it bears an equal

likeness to Mark ix. 47: 'And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire.' Yet, strange to say, it is not identical in words with either of the three" (pp. 83, 84). "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "In this only instance is there a perfect agreement between the words of Justin and the canonical Gospels, three of which, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, give the same saying of Christ in the same words. A variety of thoughts here rush upon the mind. Are these three Gospels based upon a common document? If so, is not Justin Martyr's citation drawn from the same anonymous document, rather than from the three Gospels, seeing he does not name them? If, on the other hand, Justin has cited them accurately in this instance, why has he failed to do so in the others? For no other reason than that traditionary sayings are generally thus irregularly exact or inexact, and Justin, citing from them, has been as irregularly exact as they were" (Ibid, p. 85). "The result to which a perusal of his works will lead is of the gravest character. He will be found to quote nearly two hundred sentiments or sayings of Christ; but makes hardly a single clear allusion to all those circumstances of time or place which give so much interest to Christ's teaching, as recorded in the four Gospels. The inference is that he quotes Christ's sayings as delivered by tradition or taken down in writing before the four Gospels were compiled" (Ibid, pp. 89, 90). Paley and Lardner both deal with Justin somewhat briefly, calling every passage in his works resembling slightly any passage in the Gospels a "quotation;" in both cases only ignorance of Justin's writings can lead any reader to assent to the inferences they draw.

HEGESIPPUS was a Jewish Christian, who, according to Eusebius, flourished about A.D. 166. Soter is said to have succeeded Anicetus in the bishopric of Rome in that year, and Hegesippus appears to have been in Rome during the episcopacy of both. He travelled about from place to place, and his testimony to the Gospels is that "in every city the doctrine prevails according to what is declared by the law, and the prophets, and the Lord" ("Eccles. Hist.," bk. iv., ch. 22). Further, Eusebius quotes the story of the death of James, the Apostle, written by Hegesippus, and in this James is reported to have said to the Jews: "Why do ye

now ask me respecting Jesus, the Son of Man? He is now sitting in the heavens, on the right hand of great power, and is about to come on the clouds of heaven." And when he is being murdered, he prays, "O Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (see "Eccles. Hist.," bk. ii., ch. 23). The full absurdity of regarding this as a testimony to the Gospels will be seen when it is remembered that it is implied thereby that James, the brother and apostle of Christ, knew nothing of his words until he read them in the Gospels, and that he was murdered before the Gospel of Luke, from which alone he could quote the prayer of Jesus, is thought, by most Christians, to have been written. One other fragment of Hegesippus is preserved by Stephanus Gobarus, wherein Hegesippus, speaking against Paul's assertion "that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," opposes to it the saying of the Lord, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears that hear." This is paralleled by Matt. xiii. 16 and Luke x. 23. "We need not point out that the saying referred to by Hegesippus, whilst conveying the same sense as that in the two Gospels, differs as materially from them as they do from each other, and as we might expect a quotation taken from a different, though kindred, source, like the Gospel according to the Hebrews, to do" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. i., p. 447). Why does not Paley tell us that Eusebius writes of him, not that he quoted from the Gospels, but that "he also states some particulars from the Gospel of the Hebrews and from the Syriac, and particularly from the Hebrew language, showing that he himself was a convert from the Hebrews. Other matters he also records as taken from the unwritten tradition of the Jews" ("Eccles. Hist.," bk. iv., ch. 22). Here, then, we have the source of the quotations in Hegesippus, and yet Paley conceals this, and deliberately speaks of him as referring to our Gospel of Matthew!

EPISTLE OF THE CHURCHES OF LYONS AND VIENNE.—Paley quietly dates this A.D. 170, although the persecution it describes occurred in A.D. 177 (see ante, pp. 257, 258). The "exact references to the Gospels of Luke and John and to the Acts of the Apostles," spoken of by Paley ("Evidences," p. 125), are not easy to find. Westcott says: "It contains no reference by name to any book of the New Testament, but its coincidences of language with the Gospels of St. Luke and St. John, with the Acts of the Apostles, with the Epistles of St. Paul to the Romans, Corinthians (?), Ephe-

sians, Philippians, and the First to Timothy, with the first Catholic Epistles of St. Peter and St. John, and with the Apocalypse, are indisputable" ("On the Canon," p. 336). Unfortunately, neither Paley nor Dr. Westcott refer us to the passages in question, Paley quoting only one. We will, therefore, give one of these at full length, leaving our readers to judge of it as an "exact reference." "Vattius Epagathus, one of the brethren who abounded in the fulness of the love of God and man, and whose walk and conversation had been so unexceptionable, though he was only young, shared in the same testimony with the elder Zacharias. He walked in all the commandments and righteousness of the Lord blameless, full of love to God and his neighbour" ("Eusebius," bk. v., chap. 1). This is, it appears, an "exact reference" to Luke i. 6, and we own we should not have known it unless it had been noted in "Supernatural Religion." Tischendorf, on the other hand, refers the allusion to Zacharias to the Protevangelium of James ("Sup. Rel.," vol. ii., p. 202).

The second "exact reference" is, that Vattius had "the Spirit more abundantly than Zacharias;" "such an unnecessary and insidious comparison would scarcely have been made had the writer known our Gospel and regarded it as inspired Scripture" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. ii., p. 204). The quotation "that the day would come when everyone that slayeth you will think he is doing God a service," is one of those isolated sayings referred to Christ which might be found in any account of his works, or might have been handed down by tradition. This epistle is the last witness called by Paley, prior to Irenæus, and might, indeed, fairly be regarded as contemporary with him.

Although Paley does not allude to the "Clementines," books falsely ascribed to Clement of Rome, these are sometimes brought to prove the existence of the Gospels in the second century. But they are useless as witnesses, from the fact that the date at which they were themselves written is a matter of dispute. "Critics variously date the composition of the original Recognitions from about the middle of the second century to the end of the third, though the majority are agreed in placing them, at least, in the latter century" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. ii., p. 5). "It is unfortunate that there are not sufficient materials for determining the date of the Clementine Homilies" ("Gospels in the Second Century," Rev. W. Sanday, p. 161). Part of the Clemen-

tines, called the "Recognitions," is useless as a basis for argument, for these "are only extant in a Latin translation by Rufinus, in which the quotations from the Gospels have evidently been assimilated to the canonical text which Rufinus himself uses" (Ibid). Of the rest, "we are struck at once by the small amount of exact coincidence, which is considerably less than that which is found in the quotations from the Old Testament" (Ibid, p. 168). "In the Homilies there are very numerous quotations of expressions of Jesus, and of Gospel History, which are generally placed in the mouth of Peter, or introduced with such formula as 'The teacher said,' 'Jesus said,' 'He said,' 'The prophet said,' but in no case does the author name the source from which these sayings and quotations are derived.....De Wette says, 'The quotations of evangelical works and histories in the pseudo-Clementine writings, from their free and unsatisfactory nature, permit only uncertain conclusions as to their written source.' Critics have maintained very free and conflicting views regarding that source. Apologists, of course, assert that the quotations in the Homilies are taken from our Gospels only. Others ascribe them to our Gospels, with a supplementary apocryphal work, the Gospel according to the Hebrews, or the Gospel according to Peter. Some, whilst admitting a subsidiary use of some of our Gospels, assert that the author of the Homilies employs, in preference, the Gospel according to Peter; whilst others, recognising also the similarity of the phenomena presented by these quotations with those of Justin's, conclude that the author does not quote our Gospels at all, but makes use of the Gospel according to Peter, or the Gospel according to the Hebrews. Evidence permitting of such divergent conclusions manifestly cannot be of a decided character" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. ii., pp. 6, 7).

On Basilides (teaching c. A.D. 135) and Valentinus (A.D. 140), two of the early Gnostic teachers, we need not delay, for there is scarcely anything left of their writings, and all we know of them is drawn from the writings of their antagonists; it is claimed that they knew and made use of the canonical Gospels, and Canon Westcott urges this view of Basilides, but the writer of "Supernatural Religion" characterises this plea "as unworthy of a scholar, and only calculated to mislead readers who must generally be ignorant of the actual facts of the case" (vol. ii., p. 42). Basilides says that he received his doctrine from Glaucias, the "interpreter of

Peter," and "it is apparent, however, that Basilides, in basing his doctrines on these apocryphal books as inspired, and upon tradition, and in having a special Gospel called after his own name, which, therefore, he clearly adopts as the exponent of his ideas of Christian truth, absolutely ignores the canonical Gospels altogether, and not only does not offer any evidence for their existence, but proves that he did not recognise any such works as of authority. Therefore, there is no ground whatever for Tischendorf's assumption that the Commentary of Basilides 'On the Gospel' was written upon our Gospels, but that idea is, on the contrary, negatived in the strongest way by all the facts of the case" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. ii., pp. 45, 46). Both with this ancient heretic, as with Valentinus, it is impossible to distinguish what is ascribed to him from what is ascribed to his followers, and thus evidence drawn from either of them is weaker even than usual.

Marcion, the greatest heretic of the second century, ought to prove a useful witness to the Christians if the present Gospels had been accepted in his time as canonical. He was the son of the Christian Bishop of Sinope, in Pontus, and taught in Rome for some twenty years, dating from about A.D. 140. Only one Gospel was acknowledged by him, and fierce has been the controversy as to what this Gospel was. It is only known to us through his antagonists, who generally assert that the Gospel used by him was the third Synoptic, changed and adapted to suit his heretical views. Paley says, "This rash and wild controversialist published a recension or chastised edition of St. Luke's Gospel" ("Evidences," p. 167), but does not condescend to give us the smallest reason for so broad an assertion. This question has, however, been thoroughly debated among German critics, the one side maintaining that Marcion mutilated Luke's Gospel, the other that Marcion's Gospel was earlier than Luke's, and that Luke's was made from it; while some, again, maintained that both were versions of an older original. From this controversy we may conclude that there was a strong likeness between Marcion's Gospel and the third Synoptic, and that it is impossible to know which is the earlier of the two. The resolution of the question is made hopeless by the fact that "the principal sources of our information regarding Marcion's Gospel are the works of his most bitter denouncers Tertullian and Epiphanius" ("Sup. Rel.,"

vol. ii., p. 88). "At the very best, even if the hypothesis that Marcion's Gospel was a mutilated Luke were established, Marcion affords no evidence in favour of the authenticity or trustworthy character of our third Synoptic. His Gospel was nameless, and his followers repudiated the idea of its having been written by Luke; and regarded even as the earliest testimony for the existence of Luke's Gospel, that testimony is not in confirmation of its genuineness and reliability, but, on the contrary, condemns it as garbled and interpolated" (Ibid, pp. 146, 147).

It is scarcely worth while to refer to the supposed evidence of the "Canon of Muratori," since the date of this fragment is utterly unknown. In the year 1740 Muratori published this document in a collection of Italian antiquities, stating that he had found it in the Ambrosian library at Milan, and that he believed that the MS. from which he took it had been in existence about 1000 years. It is not known by whom the original was written, and it bears no date; it is but a fragment, commencing: "at which, nevertheless, he was present, and thus he placed it. Third book of the Gospel according to Luke." Further on it speaks of "the fourth of the Gospels of John." The value of the evidence of an anonymous fragment of unknown date is simply *nil*. "It is by some affirmed to be a complete treatise on the books received by the Church, from which fragments have been lost; while others consider it a mere fragment itself. It is written in Latin, which by some is represented as most corrupt, whilst others uphold it as most correct. The text is further rendered almost unintelligible by every possible inaccuracy of orthography and grammar, which is ascribed diversely to the transcriber, to the translator, and to both. Indeed, such is the elastic condition of the text, resulting from errors and obscurity of every imaginable description, that, by means of ingenious conjectures, critics are able to find in it almost any sense they desire. Considerable difference of opinion exists as to the original language of the fragment, the greater number of critics maintaining that the composition is a translation from the Greek, while others assert it to have been originally written in Latin. Its composition is variously attributed to the Church of Africa, and to a member of the Church in Rome" ("Sup. Rel.," vol. ii., pp. 238, 239). On a disputable scrap of this kind no argument can be based; there is no evidence even to show that the thing was in

existence at all until Muratori published it; it is never referred to by any early writer, nor is there a scintilla of evidence that it was known to the early Church.

After a full and searching analysis of all the documents, orthodox and heretical, supposed to have been written in the first two centuries after Christ, the author of "Supernatural Religion" thus sums up:—"After having exhausted the literature and the testimony bearing on the point, we have not found a single distinct trace of any one of those Gospels during the first century and a half after the death of Jesus Any argument for the mere existence of our Synoptics based upon their supposed rejection by heretical leaders and sects has the inevitable disadvantage, that the very testimony which would show their existence would oppose their authenticity. There is no evidence of their use by heretical leaders, however, and no direct reference to them by any writer, heretical or orthodox, whom we have examined" (vol. ii., pp. 248, 249). Nor is the fact of this blank absence of evidence of identity all that can be brought to bear in support of our proposition, for there is another fact that tells very heavily against the identity of the now accepted Gospels with those that were current in earlier days, namely, the noteworthy charge brought against the Christians that they changed and altered their sacred books; the orthodox accused the unorthodox of varying the Scriptures, and the heretics retorted the charge with equal pertinacity. The Ebionites maintained that the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew was the only authentic Gospel, and regarded the four Greek Gospels as unreliable. The Marcionites admitted only the Gospel resembling that of Luke, and were accused by the orthodox of having altered that to suit themselves. Celsus, writing against Christianity, formulates the charge: "Some believers, like men driven by drunkenness to commit violence on themselves, have altered the Gospel history, since its first composition, three times, four times, and oftener, and have re-fashioned it, so as to be able to deny the objections made against it" ("Origen Cont. Celsus," bk. ii., chap. 27, as quoted by Norton, p. 63). Origen admits "that there are those who have altered the Gospels," but pleads that it has been done by heretics, and that this "is no reproach against true Christianity" (Ibid). Only, most reverend Father of the Church, if heretics accuse orthodox, and orthodox accuse heretics, of altering the Gospels, how are we to be sure

that they have come down unaltered to us? Clement of Alexandria notes alterations that had been made. Dionysius, of Corinth, complaining of the changes made in his own writings, bears witness to this same fact: "It is not, therefore, matter of wonder if some have also attempted to adulterate the sacred writings of the Lord, since they have attempted the same in other works that are not to be compared with these" ("Eusebius," bk. iv., ch. 23). Faustus, the Manichæan, the great opponent of Augustine, writes: "For many things have been inserted by your ancestors in the speeches of our Lord, which, though put forth under his name, agree not with his faith; especially since—as already it has been often proved by us—that these things were not written by Christ, nor his Apostles, but a long while after their assumption, by I know not what sort of half Jews, not even agreeing with themselves, who made up their tale out of report and opinions merely; and yet, fathering the whole upon the names of the Apostles of the Lord, or on those who were supposed to have followed the Apostles; they mendaciously pretended that they had written their lies and conceits *according to them*" (Lib. 33, ch. 3, as quoted and translated in "Diegesis," pp. 61, 62).

The truth is, that in those days, when books were only written, the widest door was opened to alterations, additions, and omissions; incidents or remarks written, perhaps, in the margin of the text by one transcriber, were transferred into the text itself by the next copyist, and were thereafter indistinguishable from the original matter. In this way the celebrated text of the three witnesses (1 John, v. 7) is supposed to have crept into the text. Dealing with this, in reference to the New Testament, Eichhorn points out that it was easy to alter a manuscript in transcribing it, and that, as manuscripts were written for individual use, such alterations were considered allowable, and that the altered manuscript, being copied in its turn, such changes passed into circulation unnoticed. Owners of manuscripts added to them incidents of the life of Christ, or any of his sayings, which they had heard of, and which were not recorded in their own copies, and thus the story grew and grew, and additional legends were incorporated with it, until the historical basis became overlaid with myth. The vast number of readings in the New Testament, no less—according to Dr. Angus, one of the present Revision Committee—than 100,000, prove the facility with which

variations were introduced into MSS. by those who had charge of them. In heated and angry controversy between different schools of monks appeals were naturally made to the authority of the Scriptures, and what more likely—indeed more certain—than that these monks should introduce variations into their MS. copies favouring the positions for which they were severally contending?

The most likely way in which the Gospels grew into their present forms is, that the various traditions relating to Christ were written down in different places for the instruction of catechumens, and that these, passing from hand to hand, and mouth to mouth, grew into a large mass of disjointed stories, common to many churches. This mass was gradually sifted, arranged, moulded into historical shape, which should fit into the preconceived notions of the Messiah, and thus the four Gospels gradually grew into their present form, and were accepted on all hands as the legacy of the apostolic age. No careful reader can avoid noticing the many coincidences of expression between the three synoptics, and deducing from these coincidences the conclusion that one narrative formed the basis of the three histories. Ewald supposes the existence of a *Spruchsammlung*—collected sayings of Christ—but such a collection is not enough to explain the phenomena we refer to. Dr. Davidson says: “The rudiments of an original oral Gospel were formed in Jerusalem, in the bosom of the first Christian Church; and the language of it must have been Aramæan, since the members consisted of Galileans, to whom that tongue was vernacular. It is natural to suppose that they were accustomed to converse with one another on the life, actions, and doctrines of their departed Lord, dwelling on the particulars that interested them most, and rectifying the accounts given by one another, where such accounts were erroneous, or seriously defective. The Apostles, who were eye-witnesses of the public life of Christ, could impart correctness to the narratives, giving them a fixed character in regard to authenticity and form. In this manner an original oral Gospel in Aramæan was formed. We must not, however, conceive of it as put into the shape of any of our present Gospels, or as being of like extent; but as consisting of leading particulars in the life of Christ, probably the most striking and the most affecting, such as would leave the best impression on the minds of the disciples. The incidents and sayings connected with their Divine

Master naturally assumed a particular shape from repetition, though it was simply a rudimental one. They were not compactly linked in regular or systematic sequence. They were the oral germ and essence of a Gospel, rather than a proper Gospel itself, at least, according to our modern ideas of it. But the Aramæan language was soon laid aside. When Hellenists evinced a disposition to receive Christianity, and associated themselves with the small number of Palestinian converts, Greek was necessarily adopted. As the Greek-speaking members far outnumbered the Aramæan-speaking brethren, the oral Gospel was put into Greek. Henceforward Greek, the language of the Hellenists, became the medium of instruction. The truths and facts, before repeated in Hebrew, were now generally promulgated in Greek by the apostles and their converts. The historical cyclus, which had been forming in the Church at Jerusalem, assumed a determinate character in the Greek tongue" ("Introduction to the New Testament," by S. Davidson, LL.D., p. 405. Ed. 1848). Thus we find learned Christians obliged to admit an uninspired collection as the basis of the inspired Gospel, and laying down a theory which is entirely incompatible with the idea that the Synoptic Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Our Gospels are degraded into versions of an older Gospel, instead of being the inspired record of contemporaries, speaking "that we do know."

Canon Westcott writes of the three Synoptic Gospels, that "they represent, as is shown by their structure, a common basis, common materials, treated in special ways. They evidently contain only a very small selection from the words and works of Christ, and yet their contents are included broadly in one outline. Their substance is evidently much older than their form.....The only explanation of the narrow and definite limit within which the evangelic history (exclusive of St. John's Gospel) is confined, seems to be that a collection of representative words and works was made by an authoritative body, such as the Twelve, at a very early date, and that this, which formed the basis of popular teaching, gained exclusive currency, receiving only subordinate additions and modifications. This Apostolic Gospel—the oral basis, as I have endeavoured to show elsewhere, of the Synoptic narratives—dates unquestionably from the very beginning of the

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