

THE DIAL.

VOL. IV. OCTOBER, 1843. No. II.

HENNELL ON THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY.*

THE present aspect of the world of Theology is highly interesting to a philosophic looker-on; a new geological formation seems to be taking place in the Great Sahara of theological speculation. Doctrines which have come down to us, bearded with venerable antiquity; conclusions that have passed unchallenged through centuries of doubt; oracles and myths and confident assertions and timid conjectures, emboldened at last by success to assume command over ingenuous youth and experienced wisdom,—all of these meet with a reception in our time a little different from what they have received in days of yore. There was a time when the Spirit of Freedom dared not enter the domain of Theology. The Priest uttered the Anathema: HE THAT DOUBTETH IS DAMNED, and Freedom fled away. Next, men insinuated what they dared not say. The descendants of Porphyry, Celsus, Marcion, might be hanged or burned, but the children of Lucian and Olympiodorus continued to flourish. Servetus could be got rid of, but Bayle could not be hanged; and as for reasoning with such men, it were as well to reason with a cloud, or to wrestle with Proteus and Nereus. They defied equally argument and faggots. Now a different day has come, and grave men venture in their own name, and with no coverture, to assail doctrines ancient and time-honored, and ask them their RIGHT TO BE. It is curious to see how this spirit

* An Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity, by CHARLES C. HENNELL. Second Edition. London: Sold by T. Allman, 42 Holborn Hill. 1841.

appears in all countries distinguished by liberal culture, at the same time; and often under circumstances, which prove that hearty thinkers have come independently to the same result. We see this in New England, in Old England, France, and Germany. Matters long ago hammered and pronounced complete, are brought up again to the furnace and the anvil; old questions are asked over anew, when the old answer did not suit the case; others come up each century anew.

Some tell us the Reformation was a mistake; that "we have too much religious knowledge," exclaiming at sunrise, as the Jews in exile, "would God it were night!" They see the religious world lies weak and low, diseased with materialism, covetousness, sick as Job with complicated distress; that the consecrated leeches are confounded, and have no counsel, but that of Job's friends; they look back to the hour of past darkness and say, "We remember the flesh which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic. Let us return thither; the gods of Egypt were true gods, they baked us bread, and they thought for us. Let us put on the surplices and the copes and the stoles and the hoods and the cassocks and the bands of our fathers, and let us kneel as they knelt, and repeat their prayers and their psalteries and their vows, and we shall be as gods." Others think the past was all wrong, the present all bad. We are to prepare for the future by forgetting all that has been learned in six thousand years of toil. "Experience," say they, "lies; History is a deceiver; a fact is a falsehood; nothing is so doubtful as what men are certain of. The world is sick, but the cure is easy. Abolish marriage, and unchastity will perish; annihilate property, covetousness and indolence will die out with no struggle; repeal the laws, destroy the jails, hang the Judges, crime shall end; shut up the schools, annul the Sabbath, burn the Bible, and pluck down the churches, all men will instantly become wise as Plato, and holy as Francis of Sales. Cold and famine shall be no more, if you will go naked and leave the earth untilled. Come up to us, ye sons of men, and we will teach you the way of Life."

Now between these two parties—which we have but little overcolored—are all sorts of sects and opinions,

fighting with promiscuous din. Men of one idea, which they call the universe; men of vast thought, at least of vast counsel; a philosopher, chasing his own shadow and clutching thereat, as if it were the very substance, or even the Archetypal Idea; a poet, who would reform the world with moonshine, and men here and there, who apply right reasons to facts, and all these, acting with freedom never known before—no wonder there is some little confusion in the world. We have often thought if there were what the ancients called "a soul of the world," it must have a hard time of it. But out of what seems anarchy to finite eyes, the all-bountiful Father surely wins the fair result of universal harmony;—

"All nature's difference makes all nature's peace."

But to return from our wanderings. There is one point in theological discussion of great interest at the present day, that is, the History of the New Testament, or the History of Christ, for the two are most intimately connected, though not essentially so, for it is plain Jesus was the same before as after the New Testament was written. The New Testament has never since the second century been so freely examined and speculated upon as now. The several important works relative to this subject, which have recently appeared in France, Germany, and England, are curious signs of the times.* If we compare these, as a whole, with former works on the same theme, we see they are written in a new method and in a new spirit; written with freedom and openness, and without insinuations and sneers. Some writers, we believe, still contend that every word in the New Testament and Old Testament is to be regarded as the word of God, infallible, divine, miraculously given to mankind. Others attempt, though guardedly, to separate Christianity from its documents; so they deny that it is to stand or fall with the inspiration of the Old Testament. Then they attempt to rationalize the New Testament by expunging from it, as far as possible, all that is most hostile to reason. Thus some, in high theological place, do not hesitate to say that mythical stories run through the New Testament; that Paul sometimes reasons ill; that the early apostles were deceived in

* The works of Salvador, Hase, Strauss, and Bauer.

fancying the world was soon to end, in their time; that, even in the Gospels there are things which cannot be credited; that the conscientious Christian is not bound to believe that the angels, who announced the miraculous birth of Jesus, had Hebrew or Babylonian names, or that they sung passages out of the Alexandrian version of the Old Testament, and misquoted as they sung. Some grave men in New England, of undoubted soundness in the faith, teach that the angel, who delivered Peter from the prison, was a man with a bag of money to bribe the jailor. Some, too, while they hold fast to each iota of the canonical text of the New Testament, allow themselves good latitude in explaining the Old Testament, and teach that Moses wrote no part of it; that its miracles are false; its Psalms but good devotional poetry; and its Prophets were but pious and noble-minded men, who had no more of miraculous inspiration than Malchus and Cassandra and Tiresias. These admissions they make from love of truth, and out of regard to the letter of the New Testament, for they are willing to save the most valuable by losing the inferior part.

The questions about the origin of the Christian records, about the origin and history of Christ, we think are not *religious* nor even *theological* questions. They are interesting subjects of inquiry, and belong to the department of human archæology; subjects of great interest, but not of the same vital moment with the inquiry about God, the Soul, Religion, Immortality, and Life. We rejoice exceedingly in the attention now bestowed upon these themes, and have no doubt it will produce much good for the present and the future. The work of Mr. Hennell is a remarkable phenomenon in English Theology, appearing contemporary with the strong conservative movement of the more spiritual part of the established church. The author—like Abelard, Grotius, Leclerc, Eichhorn, and Gesenius, and other great names in Theology—is not a clergyman. He is, we are told, a merchant of London, who has found time to make the requisite research into ancient and modern writers, and produce this new and valuable treatise on the origin of Christianity. The first edition was published in 1838. He says “the hypothesis, that there is a mixture of truth and fable in the Gospels, has been admitted . . . by

many critics bearing the Christian name. The same method of free investigation, which led Priestley and Belsham to throw doubt upon the truth of the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke, may allow other inquirers to make further excisions from the gospel history.”* The author began his own inquiry in the belief, that the miraculous facts supposed to lie at the foundation of Christianity could not be shaken. He aimed to get at the truth; thus avoiding the twofold error of the *believer*, who starts with the fixed idea, that the New Testament is divinely inspired, and of the *unbeliever*, who searches for faults rather than the truth. He wishes his book to be considered “as employed in the real service of Christianity rather than an attack upon it.” His aim is “simply to investigate the origin of the religion, uninfluenced by speculation on the consequences.”

The work is divided into eighteen chapters, on the following subjects:—Historical Sketch from the Babylonish captivity to the death of Jesus, and thence to the end of the first century; the date and credibility of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; Examination of the accounts of the Resurrection and Ascension, and on the other miracles in the four Gospels, and those in the Acts of the Apostles; general objections to the miracles of Jesus, and the evidence afforded to the miracles by the Apostolic writings; on the prophecies; the parts of Isaiah supposed to relate to Christianity; on the book of Daniel; whether Jesus foretold his own death and resurrection; on the character, views, and doctrine of Jesus; comparison of the precepts of Jesus with Jewish writings; concluding reflections. A brief Appendix is added, which treats more minutely some points touched upon in the text.

We will give an analysis of the more important portions of the book. He shows the gradual growth of the Messianic idea among the Jews, and the romantic form it assumed in the time of their restoration from captivity. He gives, from Josephus and Philo, an account of the Essenes,

* This has been done already by some moderns. Mr. Norton, in his highly valuable treatise, *The Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels*, Boston, 1837, thinks the following passages highly doubtful: Math. chaps. i., ii., xxvii. 3–10, 52, 53. Mark xvi. 9–20. Luke xxii. 43, 44. John v. 3, 4, vii. 53, viii. 11, xxi. 24, 25.

the third philosophical sect of the Jews. As Josephus is in all hands we will only refer to his works,* but will give the extract from Philo describing the Essenes.

“Palestine and Syria are not unproductive of honorable and good men, but are occupied by numbers, not inconsiderable, compared even with the very populous nation of the Jews. These, exceeding four thousand, are called Essenes, which name, though not, in my opinion, formed by strict analogy, corresponds in Greek to the word ‘holy.’ For they have attained the highest holiness in the worship of God, and that not by sacrificing animals, but by cultivating purity of heart. They live principally in villages. Some cultivate the ground; others pursue the arts of peace, and such employments as are beneficial to themselves without injury to their neighbors. They are the only people who, though destitute of money and possessions, felicitate themselves as rich, deeming riches to consist in frugality and contentment. Among them no one manufactures darts, arrows, or weapons of war. They decline trade, commerce, and navigation, as incentives to covetousness; nor have they any slaves among them, but all are free, and all in their turn administer to others. They condemn the owners of slaves as tyrants, who violate the principles of justice and equality.

“As to learning, they leave that branch of it which is called logic, as not necessary to the acquisition of virtue, to fierce disputants about words; and cultivate natural philosophy only so far as respects the existence of God and the creation of the universe: other parts of natural knowledge they give up to vain and subtle metaphysicians, as really surpassing the powers of man. But moral philosophy they eagerly study, conformably to the established laws of their country, the excellence of which the human mind can hardly comprehend without the inspiration of God.

“These laws they study at all times, but more especially on the Sabbath. Regarding the seventh day as holy, they abstain on it from all other works, and assemble in those sacred places which are called *Synagogues*, arranging themselves according to their age, the younger below his senior, with a deportment grave, becoming, and attentive. Then one of them, taking the *Bible*, reads a portion of it, the obscure parts of which are explained by another more skilful person. For most of the Scriptures they interpret in that symbolical sense which they have zealously copied from the patriarchs; and the subjects of instruction are piety, holiness, righteousness; domestic and political economy; the knowledge of things really good, bad, and indifferent; what

*Wars, ii. ch. 8. *Antiq.* xviii. 1.

objects ought to be pursued, and what to be avoided. In discussing these topics, the ends which they have in view, and to which they refer as so many rules to guide them, are the love of God, the love of virtue, and the love of man. Of their love to God they give innumerable proofs by leading a life of continued purity, unstained by oaths and falsehoods, by regarding him as the author of every good, and the cause of no evil. They evince their attachment to virtue by their freedom from avarice, from ambition, from sensual pleasure; by their temperance and patience; by their frugality, simplicity, and contentment; by their humility, their regard to the laws, and other similar virtues. Their love to man is evinced by their benignity, their equity, and their liberality, of which it is not improper to give a short account, though no language can adequately describe it.

“In the first place, there exists among them no house, however private, which is not open to the reception of all the rest; and not only the members of the same society assemble under the same domestic roof, but even strangers of the same persuasion have free admission to join them. There is but one treasure, whence all derive subsistence; and not only their provisions, but their clothes are common property. Such mode of living under the same roof, and of dieting at the same table, cannot, in fact, be proved to have been adopted by any other description of men.

“The sick are not despised or neglected, but live in ease and affluence, receiving from the treasury whatever their disorder or their exigencies require. The aged, too, among them, are loved, revered, and attended as parents by affectionate children; and a thousand hands and hearts prop their tottering years with comforts of every kind. Such are the champions of virtue, which philosophy, without the parade of Grecian oratory, produces, proposing, as the end of their institutions, the performance of those laudable actions which destroy slavery and render freedom invincible.

“This effect is evinced by the many powerful men who rise against the Essenes in their own country, in consequence of differing from them in principles and sentiments. Some of these persecutors, being eager to surpass the fierceness of untamed beasts, omit no measure that may gratify their cruelty; and they cease not to sacrifice whole flocks of those within their power; or like butchers, to tear their limbs in pieces, until themselves are brought to that justice, which superintends the affairs of men. Yet not one of these furious persecutors has been able to substantiate any accusation against this band of holy men. On the other hand, all men, captivated by their integrity and honor, unite with them as those who truly enjoy the freedom and independence of nature, admiring their communion and liber-

ality, which language cannot describe, and which is the surest pledge of a perfect and happy life."—pp. 17–20.

Of the Pharisees and Sadducees nothing need now be said. He gives an account of what Josephus calls a *fourth* philosophic sect, of which Judas, the Galilean, was the author, and adds:—

"It appears very clear that the most distinguishing feature of the new sect of Judas, was the revival in a more emphatic manner of the ancient traditional expectation of a Kingdom of God, or of Heaven. He taught that men should regard God as their only ruler and Lord, and despise the apparent strength of the hateful foreigners, since God who had so often delivered his people, would be able to protect them again, if they were not wanting to themselves. He called into new life the slumbering hopes of Israel, and bid him endeavor to regain the glories of his long-lost theocracy, which might possibly be destined to reappear speedily, and in splendor proportionate to its present obscurity, provided only the nation would perform its own part."—pp. 27, 28.

He considers John the Baptist an enthusiastic Essene, who imitated Elijah, as announced by Malachi, and combined the doctrines of the Essenes with those of Judas, omitting the warlike tendency of the latter. John produced a strong excitement; crowds came to hear him, and such as believed "partook of the waters of purification," and were baptized after the fashion of the Essenes. Among his followers "was a Galilean named Jesus, the son of Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth,—a peasant of Galilee, possessed of one of those gifted minds which are able to make an impression on mankind." He expected the miraculous elevation of the Jews, and thought himself the prophet and prince who should fill the throne of David. A sincere believer in the authority of Moses and the prophets, he drew his chief materials of thought from observation on men and things about him; commented freely on the Scriptures, giving them his own meaning, and delivering his own thoughts with great power. He retained the pure morality of the Essenes, but omitted their austerities; adopted the liberalism of Judas, but not his incendiary policy. Jesus determined to imitate Moses by assuming the character of the Messiah. The preaching of John raised him from the obscurity of a carpenter of Nazareth, and he then began to

preach the kingdom of heaven, which was quite as much political as spiritual.* This, we think, is one of the weakest parts of the book, and wonder how a writer so clear-headed and free from prejudice should arrive at this conclusion. But to proceed. Rude men would suppose a man of great spiritual power must command nature as well as man; Jesus himself might share the opinion; therefore, when the multitude urged him to heal their diseases, he spoke the word, and their confidence in his power in some cases effected a cure.† Certain diseases were popularly ascribed to demons entering the human body; it was believed some men had power of expelling them. In some an authoritative word might effect a momentary calm, or the excitement of the patient produce the appearance of recovery. The story would be enlarged in passing from mouth to mouth, and the reputation of Jesus as a miracle-worker soon be established. The Jewish rulers who had put John to death, sought to arrest Jesus. He avoided the danger by flying to the desert. But this could not last long. He determined to go to Jerusalem and claim the Messiahship; made his entry into Jerusalem riding on an ass-colt, to apply to himself a passage of Zechariah supposed to relate to the Messiah. The people proclaimed him as the Son of David, and he preached to them in defiance of the rulers. A few of the nobles befriended him in secret. But Jesus began to change his own views, and to expect a kingdom hereafter to be revealed from Heaven, and when in the time of greatest trial "behaved like a Prophet, Messiah, and Son of God, for he believed himself to be such."

After his burial in the tomb and garden, Mr. Hennell thinks Joseph feared that trouble might befall him for his connection with Jesus, and therefore removed the body from the tomb, or that part of it where it had been first placed, and "directed the agent who remained in charge of the open sepulchre to inform the visitants that Jesus was

* See Reinhard's Plan of the Founder of Christianity (New York, 1841), where this and similar views are ably opposed.

† Instances of this sort, we are told, are not unknown to medical men. A writer so enlightened as Mr. Furness (Jesus and his Biographers) thinks great spiritual excellence gives power over nature. Father Matthew, it is said, has sometimes found it difficult to convince the rude men of Ireland that he could not *work a miracle*.

not there, but that they should behold him in Galilee." The message was first given to Mary Magdalene, and the occurrence was at length converted into the appearance of an angel, of two angels, and finally of Jesus himself. Then came the old notion that Messiah must come in the clouds of Heaven, and the apparently mysterious circumstances of his death strengthened their belief in his Messiahship, and the expectation of his approaching kingdom returned as the belief of his future reappearance gained ground. The followers of Christ were only to wait. They now preached as before the kingdom of God, but added, that Jesus was the Messiah and would soon reappear as King of Israel and introduce that kingdom. The resurrection of Jesus confirmed the Pharisaic and popular doctrine of the restoration of the body. At the feast, seven weeks after the crucifixion, three thousand joined the followers of Jesus, and a little later five thousand more. Here was a new religious party among the Jews. The Pharisees favored it; but as it became unpopular with them, it became acceptable with the Judaizing Gentiles. Cornelius, a centurion of Cesarea, and others, were baptized as followers of Jesus. Two parties were formed in the new sect, the one adhering strictly to the old Mosaic ritual, the other departing from it. The character of the Messiah is changed from the "Son of David," and "King of Israel," to "the Judge of Mankind." Paul is converted, and the new faith is modified still more.

"The form, then, which the Essene Judaism assumed in the hands of Paul was this,—that men were everywhere called to repentance and purity of life, in order to prepare them for the kingdom of God and the second coming of the Messiah or Christ, whose office was to judge the world; that Jesus of Nazareth had been proved to be the Messiah by being raised from the dead; and that, in order to partake in the privileges of his kingdom, an open acknowledgment of his authority, and a belief in his resurrection, were alone necessary."—p. 68.

"Judaism, or the religion of one Deity, as reformed by Paul, and disencumbered of circumcision and the Mosaic rites, found a ready reception amongst the Greeks and Romans, with whom polytheism was nearly grown out of fashion. The philosophy of Epicurus had degenerated into sensualism. Platonism consisted of speculations unintelligible out of the schools. Christianity as preached by Paul was well adapted to fill the void in the philo-

sophic and religious world. It contained the sublime and agreeable doctrines of the paternal character of God and the resurrection of mankind; its asserted miracles and accomplished prophecies, the resurrection of Jesus, and the coming judgment of the world, were of a nature to please and excite the imagination; and its fraternal system of society tended to excite emulation and keep up enthusiasm. To follow a crucified Jew might be at first a fearful stumbling-block; but the mournful fates of Osiris, Adonis, and Hercules, followed by a glorious apotheosis, would suggest parallels sufficient to throw lustre on the story of Jesus; and the Messiah, persecuted to death and raised again, probably appealed more strongly to the imagination and the heart than if he had appeared merely as another triumphant hero demanding allegiance. Besides, the death of Christ came to be invested with a mysterious grandeur, by being represented as the great antetype of an ancient and venerable system of sacrifices, and as the offering of a paschal lamb in behalf of all mankind."—p. 70.

When the great troubles befel the Jewish state, the Christians expected the end of the world, and the reappearance of Christ. The men of Jerusalem showed that the Messiah must be only a spiritual king. The first Gospel was published about 68 or 70, A. C., and followed by many imitations. The distance of thirty-seven years from the death of Christ allowed the introduction of many fables concerning his person and character, and the doctrine of the miraculous conception arose, which the greater part of the Jewish church refused to admit. Christianity formed an alliance with the Platonism of the Alexandrian school, the result of which was a new doctrine concerning the person of Jesus, to which prominence was given by the publication of another Gospel under the name of John. Plato had spoken of the Logos, the divine wisdom or intelligence. The Platonic Jews personified it as a divine emanation,—the visible image of the invisible God, the medium by which he made the world and communicated with Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. The writer of the fourth Gospel added that *Jesus* was the Logos. Thus to the Jews, Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets; to the Greeks, he appeared to complete the scheme of Plato. Thus the Judaism of Nazareth gave the important truths of Platonism an influence in the business of the world, and opened for them an entrance into the affections, and ob-

tained for them an empire over the will of the multitudes. By the end of the first century "Jesus of Nazareth had advanced from the characters of the carpenter's son, the prophet of Galilee, the king of Israel, the Judge of mankind, to be the LOGOS, or INCARNATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEITY; and shortly afterwards the gradation was completed by IDENTIFYING HIM WITH GOD HIMSELF." p. 93.

Mr. Hennell next proceeds to consider the credibility of the four Gospels. The contents of the first Gospel show that it was written between 66 and 70, A. C., for chapter xxiv. mentions things which agree very well with events up to that time, but disagree with them after it. Irenæus, Origen, and Epiphanius, mention a Gospel of Matthew written in Hebrew, but we know little about him. He quotes from the Old Testament, as prophecies relating to Jesus, texts which are found to have nothing to do with Jesus.* If he would force the prophecies to *accommodate* his own views, he might also tamper with facts. In the second series of fourteen kings, ch. i., he omits four kings. The account of Herod murdering the young children is not confirmed by other historians; that of the birth of Jesus, if found by itself, would be considered as a wild Eastern tale; his adventures with the devil would be mentioned by few persons in modern times, except as a poetical vision. In the account of the crucifixion, the author of this Gospel mentions an earthquake, a rending of the rocks, the opening of the graves, and the resurrection of many bodies of the saints,—events no where else alluded to in the New Testament. He mentions six supernatural dreams; † sometimes he relates events in a natural manner; but sometimes adds what could not be known. Thus he gives the prayers and tells the movements of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, when the only persons present were asleep. This sort of embellishment shows itself frequently in the discourses and parables. The passage, x. 16–42, contains some things which could hardly have been intelligible in the time when they were alleged to have been spoken, but were suitable to the period when the book was written.

* E. g. ii. 15 (compare Hos. xii. 1) ii. 6, (Mic. v. 2) ii. 23 is not in the Old Testament, (but see Jud. xiii. 5, ch. ii. 17 sq., iv. 19 sq. xxi. 1; Zach. ix. 9, &c. &c.)

† I. 20; ii. 12, 13, 19, 22; xxvii. 19.

He thinks that real events occupy a larger part of this book than fiction; that it contains many things as they were delivered by the original eyewitness, and many more proceeding from him, but with some variation. It is clear that Matthew was this eyewitness, but not that he was the compiler of the *whole* Gospel. Many parts could scarcely proceed from an eyewitness. If the writer had been an apostle, he would have written independent of the church traditions, and if necessary have corrected them; but, on the contrary, he seems to gather his materials from them, as it appears from the double version of the same event, the cure of the blind man, the feedings, the demand of a sign, the accusation respecting Beelzebub. Again Papias and others say that Matthew wrote in *Hebrew*; but no one mentions that he ever saw the Hebrew original of the Greek Gospel according to Matthew. Hence it might be supposed that Matthew wrote only some fragments (*Logia* as Papias calls them) in Hebrew, and some one after him wrote the Greek Gospel in our hands, incorporating those fragments, and so it was called the Gospel *according* to Matthew, and in the next century the work of that apostle.*

"Upon the whole, then, the most that we can conclude seems to be, that this Gospel was the work of some one who became a member of the Jewish church before the war, and who collected the relics of the acts and sayings of Jesus reported by Matthew the apostle, introducing some traditions which he found elsewhere, and filling up copiously from his own invention. His aim was, probably, to do honor to Jesus and the common cause, to strengthen the church under the trying circumstances of the times, and to be the author of a work which should be generally acceptable to his brethren. That such a man should not always adhere to strict truth seems quite consistent with human nature, since in the subsequent times, and in the Christian Church, we find pious men and sincere believers allowing themselves to countenance palpable falsehoods."—p. 124.

The second Gospel is ascribed to Mark, the companion of Peter. For its authorship we have the testimony of Papias, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius,

* See the recent literature on the subject of the language and author of the first Gospel in Neudecker, *Lehrbuch der hist. krit. Einleit.* in N. T. Leip. 1840. § 23. sqq.

Epiphanius, and others. But these authorities do not decide that Peter sanctioned or knew what Mark wrote. He copied from Matthew in part, and adds other historical details, but mixes these relics of reality with some spurious matter. He seems to "have had access to one of the channels of original information not very far from its source." But he is often unconscious of the primary nature of what he records, for he saw things through the medium of his time and place, and not in their original light. He has lost sight of the semi-political bearing of the Messianic scheme; identifies the kingdom of God with the spread of the gospel, to soften the severe Judaism, that appears in Matthew, into a shape more fitting for Gentile readers.* He attempts to aggrandize Jesus by repeating the amazement of the beholders of his miracles, the great numbers attracted by him, the confession of the devils, and neglects the greater part of the most eloquent discourses and parables in Matthew. He becomes a kind of tacit commentator on the first Gospel, and we see that an intimate friend of Peter omits some of the most striking passages of Matthew, the miraculous birth and temptation of Christ, Peter's casting himself into the sea, the promise of the keys, and the miracle of the fish with money in its mouth. He omits also the dream of Pilate's wife, as well as the other five dreams of Matthew; the resurrection of the saints, and the earthquake. "It is difficult to avoid concluding that he omitted these things because he did not believe them." "He found that they were not sanctioned by Peter, or by any traditions of repute, . . . and determined that his work should not be encumbered with so much total and pure ornamental fiction."

"It is impossible to regard Mark's suppression of these passages otherwise than as a tacit condemnation of Matthew. In later times, when the means of ascertaining the truth of each story had diminished, and the whole four Gospels came to be believed in a mass, as resting upon the same authority, divine inspiration, these same questionable passages have been favorite ones with Christians, as proving most strikingly the miraculous character of Jesus."—p. 148.

* See i. 14, 15; compare iii. 14, 15, with Math. x. 1-8; vi. 30, 31, with Math. xiv. 12, 13. He omits passages of Matthew which related chiefly to Jewish interests.

Taken by itself the second is less intelligible than the first Gospel; but with that and Josephus, it not only throws light on the attempt of Jesus, but marks the grade in the modifications under which his disciples afterwards viewed him.

Luke made use of both his predecessors, but has many stories and parables of his own, which he selected from popular tradition or previous writers. He sometimes agrees with Matthew and Mark, but sometimes differs from them; for in his time they were not received with the same deference as now. His order is confused, and probably in some instances he did not know the meaning of what he repeated. He does not expand parables and discourses to suit his own times. The fictions he adopts—the visits of Gabriel to Zacharias and Mary, the scenes at the temple, the appearance of the angels to the shepherds, and of Jesus to the two disciples at Emmaus,—indicate a more refined imagination, than the tales of Joseph and the angel, Herod and the Magi. The parables which he adds,—the lost sheep, the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, Lazarus and the rich man,—are equal to any in the Gospels. But we find in him also the ascetic and monastic doctrines of the more rigorous Essenes. Luke does not say he had his facts from eyewitnesses.

To take all the three gospels together—it appears that they were written a considerable time after the events they relate; it is probable, though not certain, that the writers learned some parts from apostles or eyewitnesses, but it is uncertain which the parts are, and it is probable they are largely mingled with second-hand narratives, hearsay, and traditions; "there is strong probability that the accordant portions of the three histories contain a tolerably correct outline of the chief events of Christ's life; but some errors might find their way into all three by the mistakes or inventions of the first writers, or the traditions on which they all depended." "So in the three Gospels, after making every allowance for probable, veritable, and fiction, . . . there still seems to remain so much of reality, that the attempt of Jesus to assume the Messiahship, his public preaching in Galilee and Jerusalem, and his crucifixion might be considered from the testimony of these three writers alone, as facts deserving a place in history; which

conclusion is strongly supported by other writings and subsequent events." — pp. 175, 176.

The fourth Gospel, he thinks, was written about 97 A. C. This is of a very different character. Christ's discourses are long controversial orations without parables; the Kingdom of Heaven is nearly lost sight of; the fall of Jerusalem never alluded to. Several new subjects are introduced: the incarnation of the Logos in Christ; his coming down from Heaven, and the promise of the Comforter or Holy Spirit. Mr. Hennell thinks it probable that John did not put the detached parts of the book together himself, and adds that it is difficult to determine whether the compiler or transcriber did not add the last chapter, and improve upon the apostle's words elsewhere. The circumstances of the place (Ephesus) and time explain the difference in the subjects treated of in this and the former Gospels.

"This Gospel appears accordingly to be the attempt of a half-educated but zealous follower of Jesus, to engraft his conceptions of the platonic philosophy upon the original faith of the disciples. The divine wisdom, or logos, or light, proceeding from God, of which so much had been said in the Alexandrian school, he tells us became a man or flesh in the person of Jesus, dwelt for a time on earth, and ascended up where he was before, and where he had been from the beginning, into the bosom of the Father.

"Consequently, this Gospel shows throughout a double or Christiano-Platonic object; first to prove that Jesus is the Christ, which was common to all the apostles, and secondly that the Christ is the Son of God or Logos which descended from heaven to give light to men." — p. 180.

"To endeavor to reconcile John with his predecessors on the hypothesis, that all four wrote invariably true and correct history, is evidently hopeless. The discrepancies are so far important as to lead us inevitably to infer that some of them, and probably in all four, there is a large measure of that incorrectness which proceeds from imperfect knowledge, forgetfulness, or neglect. In the case of John, they are to such an extent as to show that neither he nor his compiler paid much regard to the Gospels of his predecessors, or used them as a guide in forming a new one. An apostle indeed could not be expected sedulously to frame his discourses so as to agree with the works of previous compilers, if he had known them; but a disregard of them, allowing of manifest contradictions, implies either that those works were but little known in his church, or that they had not yet become standards of authority." — p. 186.

In Ch. VII. he examines the accounts of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, with much ingenuity, patience, and candor, as it seems to us, and comes to the conclusion we have already stated. Perhaps it is the most valuable chapter in the whole treatise. We shall attempt no analysis of it. From the valuable chapters on miracles we will quote the following.

"John alone relates the raising of Lazarus, which, if his account were true, was the most splendid and public of all the miracles. For, according to him, it was done before friends and enemies, without any of the usual prohibitions to tell of it; many came to see Lazarus at the supper at Bethany, and the people bare record of it when Jesus entered publicly into Jerusalem.

"But notwithstanding all this, neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke appears to have had any knowledge of the affair." — p. 280.

"The story of Lazarus seems again to be forced upon the attention of the first three Evangelists, when they relate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and the conduct of the multitude; for John says, that the people then bare record of his having raised Lazarus. But here also they make not the slightest allusion to it.

"It is impossible to conceive any plausible reason for this concealment, when the same three Evangelists appear so willing to relate all the miracles they were acquainted with, and actually relate some which were said to be done in secret: That they had all forgotten this miracle so completely that it did not once occur to them whilst relating the connected circumstances, cannot be imagined; and if any miracle deserved a preference in the eyes of narrators disposed to do honor to Christ, or even to give a faithful account of him, it was this.

"The Acts and Epistles nowhere allude to this story, although it would have afforded Paul a very good instance of the resurrection of the body. 1 Cor. xv. 35.

"The first mention, therefore, of the most public and decisive of the miracles appears in a writing published at Ephesus sixty years afterwards." — pp. 281, 282.

"Most of the miracles attributed to Christ are of the same kind, viz. the removal of natural penalties. If, on opening the book which records his claims as a divine messenger, we were to find, instead of these stories of such difficult verification, declarations of the causes of blindness, fever, and palsy, and warnings to mankind to abstain from the courses which lead to such evils, the book would carry with it an evidence increasing

with the lapse of ages; since the possession of such knowledge by a person in the age, country, and circumstances of Christ, would be as miraculous as any of the works referred to: and all readers on finding that the results of the most advanced stages of human knowledge had been anticipated by the peasant of Galilee, must themselves exclaim, "Whence had this man this knowledge, having never learned?" and "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher sent by God, for no man could have this wisdom unless God were with him." — p. 298.

Chapters XII., XIII., and XIV. on the prophecies, are valuable essays, which we shall pass over, as similar views have long since been openly avowed and publicly taught by some learned men in this century.* We will, however, give the following extracts.

"There are few nations whose early literature does not contain predictions and pretended accomplishments of predictions. But Cumæ and Delphos lost their credit even in ancient times. The supposed Jewish oracles still play a conspicuous part in the religion of the day. Yet on comparing them closely with history, accomplishment and failure alternate to such an extent, that one important resemblance to their heathen kindred becomes palpable: their credit can only be maintained by preserving their ambiguity."

"As to the New Testament fulfilling the prophecies of the Old, — in the two most conspicuous features of Jewish prophecy there could not be a more decided failure. A triumphant successor of David was promised, and a carpenter's son was crucified. Zion was to be exalted, and Zion was demolished. Nor were the Christian prophecies more fortunate. — The Son of man was to appear again before that generation passed away, and he has not yet appeared."

"The *Æneid* contains many prophetic allusions to the affairs of Rome, and in the sixth book the shade of Anchises shows himself well acquainted with Roman History up to the time of Augustus, but attempts to foretel nothing beyond it. From passages of this kind the common reader would have inferred the time of the writer to be about or after that date. But suppose that Virgil had concealed his name and date, and that some religious interest were attached to the belief in the divine inspiration of his writings; it would then be taken for granted that the author lived at the beginning, not the end, of the prophecy, and the whole poem might by the allegorizing system be easily converted into a prophetic type. If the interpreter were a

* See *Christian Examiner* for 1833, vol. xvi. p. 321, sq. See also vol. v. p. 348, sq.

Catholic, the victories of the Trojan hero might prefigure the small beginnings of the Roman see on the same plains of Latium; his pious abandonment of the Carthaginian queen being exactly the type of Papal Rome's compulsory separation by divine decree from its mistress Constantinople. The prediction of Anchises, 'Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento,' was fully verified, as Peter's pence could bear witness. "Cœlique meatus describent alii melius," Galileo proved to be true. 'Debellare superbos,' how exactly fulfilled in the person of the Emperor Henry IV., and 'parcere subjectis,' in the lenity shown by Pius VII. towards Napoleon, who was, or ought to have been, spiritually his subject! Certainly a Papist, who might be inclined thus to turn Virgil to account, would find less labor than has been encountered by Protestant divines, with the Book of Daniel, for the sake of identifying the Pope with the 'man of sin.' — pp. 401, 402, 403.

Mr. Hennell thinks Jesus naturally foresaw that he must fall a martyr to his convictions, but by no means uttered such distinct prophecies of his death and resurrection as the Evangelists put into his mouth. If he had done so, we could not explain the surprise of the disciples and their unwillingness to believe the resurrection, which John explains by saying, "They knew not the Scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead."

The chapter "on the character, views, and doctrine of Christ," is to us more repulsive than any other in the book. He considers Jesus to have been an *Enthusiast*, who believed himself the predicted King of the Jews; a *Revolutionist*, expecting to restore the kingdom to Israel, by means of a popular insurrection, and procuring everlasting life to such as forsook houses and lands for his sake! How any one can come to this conclusion we cannot readily discern. True, he calls himself the Son of God; but does he make that claim for none but himself? True, he preached the kingdom of God; but is it so certain that kingdom was political? Did he not shun all chance of personal aggrandisement; forbid the love of power; bless the meek, the peaceful, the suffering? But we shall not now enter into an argument on this point. Mr. Hennell also makes him a *Reformer*, who taught that Religion consisted in the internal purity of the thoughts, and the practice of morality. He thinks, however, that he did not design to depart from the ritual Law of Moses, and would not in

this matter have gone so far as Paul! But he that summed up the Law and Prophets in LOVE to GOD AND MAN, is hardly chargeable with Jewish conservatism. Again he adds, Jesus was a *moral and religious teacher*. Here he finds the sublimity of Christ's Character. His teachings are marked by their devotional spirit, the belief in immortality, which he found popularly taught, by the great stress he lays on the rare and unpopular virtues of humility and resignation. He thinks that the character of Christ was not without its defects; but adds in closing the chapter:—

“Enough is seen of Christ to leave the impression of a real and strongly marked character; and the dimness, which is left around it, permits the exercise of the imagination in a manner both pleasing and useful. The indistinctness of the image allows it to become the gathering centre for all those highly exalted ideas of excellence which a more closely defined delineation might have prevented from resting upon it. To the superhuman powers attributed to him by his early followers, later admirers are at liberty to add all the qualities of mind and character which can delight and attract in a human being. To awaken men to the perception of moral beauty is the first step towards enabling them to attain it. But the contemplation of abstract qualities is difficult; some real or fictitious form is involuntarily sought as a substratum for the excellence which the moralist holds to view. Whilst no human character in the history of the world can be brought to mind, which, in proportion as it could be closely examined, did not present some defects disqualifying it for being the emblem of moral perfection, we can rest with least check, or sense of incongruity, on the imperfectly known character of Jesus of Nazareth. If a representative be sought of human virtue, enough is still seen of his benevolent doctrine, attractive character, and elevated designs, to direct our eyes to the Prophet and Martyr of Galilee.”—p. 450, 451.

The last chapter, entitled “Concluding Reflections, is one of great beauty and richness both of thought and sentiment.

“Whatever be the spirit with which the four Gospels be approached, it is impossible to rise from the attentive perusal of them without a strong reverence for Jesus Christ. Even the disposition to cavil and ridicule is forced to retire before the majestic simplicity of the prophet of Nazareth. Unlike Moses or Mahomet, he owes no part of the lustre which surrounds him to his acquisition of temporal power; his is the ascendancy which mankind, in proportion to their mental advancement, are

least disposed to resist—that of moral and intellectual greatness. Besides, his cruel fate engages men's affections on his behalf, and gives him an additional hold upon their allegiance. A noble-minded reformer and sage, martyred by crafty priests and brutal soldiers, is a spectacle which forces men to gaze in pity and admiration. The precepts from such a source come with an authority which no human laws could give; and Jesus is more powerful on the cross of Calvary than he would have been on the throne of Israel.

“The virtue, wisdom, and sufferings of Jesus, then, will secure to him a powerful influence over men so long as they continue to be moral, intellectual, and sympathizing beings. And as the tendency of human improvement is towards the progressive increase of these qualities, it may be presumed that the empire of Christianity, considered simply as the influence of the life, character, and doctrine of Christ over the human mind, will never cease.

“When a higher office is claimed for Christ, that of a messenger accredited from God by a supernatural birth, miraculous works, a resurrection, and an ascension, we may reasonably expect equal strength of evidence. But how stands the case? The four Gospels on these points are *not* confirmed by testimony out of the church, disagree with each other, and contain relations contrary to the order of things. The evidence on these points is reduced to the authority of these narratives themselves. In *them*, at least, the most candid mind may require strong proofs of authenticity and veracity; but again, what is the case? They are anonymous productions; their authorship is far from certain; they were written from forty to seventy years after the events which they profess to record; the writers do not explain how they came by their information; two of them appear to have copied from the first; all the four contain notable discrepancies and manifest contradictions; they contain statements at variance with histories of acknowledged authority; some of them relate wonders which even many Christians are obliged to reject as fabulous; and in general they present no character by which we can distinguish their tales of miracles from the fictions which every church has found some supporters ready to vouch for on its behalf.”—pp. 476, 477, 478.

“The miraculous birth, works, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, being thus successively surrendered, to be classed amongst the fables of an obscure age, what remains of Christianity? and what is there in the life and doctrine of Jesus that they should still claim the attention and respect of mankind in remote ages? This: Christianity forms a striking passage in the history of human nature, and appears as one of the most

prominent of the means employed in its improvement. It no longer boasts of a special divine origin, but shares in that which the Theist attributes to the world and the whole order of its events. It has presented to the world a system of moral excellence; it has led forth the principles of humanity and benevolence from the recesses of the schools and groves, and compelled them to take an active part in the affairs of life. It has consolidated the moral and religious sentiments into a more definite and influential form than had before existed, and thereby constituted an engine which has worked powerfully towards humanizing and civilizing the world.

"Moreover, Christianity has given currency to the sublime doctrines of man's relationship to the Deity, and of a future state. The former was a leading feature of Judaism, and the latter of Platonism. Christianity has invested them with the authority of established principles, and thereby contributed much to the moral elevation of mankind."—pp. 480, 481.

"Christianity itself proceeded from a nation in deep adversity; out of the distresses of Israel issued the cry for immortality. May we not regard all irremediable earthly afflictions as intended to suggest Christianity to each sufferer, and to whisper, that there must be a Father in heaven, and mansions of the blessed?"

"We see at present the incipient upheavings of another of these revolutions—the subversion of the belief in miraculous revelations, and the gradual advance of a system of natural religion, of which we cannot yet predict the whole creed, but of which we may already perceive two essential features, the recognition of a God, and that of an inherent moral nature in man. As the clearing away of the antiquated piles of the old law made way for the simpler structure of faith in Christ, so will the release from the exclusive authority of written precept enable men to hear more distinctly the voice of the moral nature within them. Reformed Judaism will be succeeded by reformed Christianity, and each change appear the transition to a more perfect law of liberty.

"Let not, then, the mind which is compelled to renounce its belief in miraculous revelations deem itself bound to throw aside, at the same time, all its most cherished associations. Its generous emotions and high contemplations may still find an occasion for exercise in the review of the interesting incidents which have forever consecrated the plains of Palestine; but it may also find pleasure in the thought that, for this exercise, no single spot of earth, and no one page of its history furnishes the exclusive theme. Whatever dimness may gather from the lapse of time and the obscurity of records about the events of a distant age, these capabilities of the mind itself remain, and always will re-

main, in full freshness and beauty. Other Jerusems will excite the glow of patriotism, other Bethanies exhibit the affections of home, and other minds of benevolence and energy seek to hasten the approach of the kingdom of man's perfection. Nor can scriptures ever be wanting—the scriptures of the physical and of the moral world—the book of the universe. Here the page is open, and the language intelligible to all men; no transcribers have been able to interpolate or erase its texts; it stands before us in the same genuineness as when first written; the simplest understanding can enter with delight into criticism upon it; the volume does not close, leaving us to thirst for more, but another and another epistle still meets the inquisitive eye, each signed with the author's own hand, and bearing undoubted characters of divine inspiration. Unable at present to comprehend the whole, we can still feel the privilege of looking into it at pleasure, of knowing a part, and of attempting the opening of further leaves. And if, after its highest efforts, the mind be compelled to sink down, acknowledging its inability, in some parts, to satisfy itself with any clear conclusion, it may remain serene at least, persuaded that God will not cause any soul to fare the worse for not knowing what he has given it no means to know. Enough is understood to enable us to see, in the Universe itself, a Son which tells us of a Father, and in all the natural beauty and moral excellence which meet us in the world an ever-present Logos, which reveals the grace and truth of its invisible source. Enough is understood to convince us that, to have a place on this beautiful planet, on almost any terms, is an unspeakable privilege; that virtue produces the highest happiness, whether for this or another world; and that there does exist an encircling mysterious Intelligence, which, as it appears to manifest its energy in arrangements for the general welfare of the creation, must ensure a provision for all the real interests of man. From all our occasional excursions into the abysses of the unseen world, and from all our efforts to reach upwards to the hidden things of God, both reason and piety bid us return tranquilly to our accustomed corner of earth, to use and enjoy fully our present lot, and to repose implicitly upon the higher wisdom in whose disposal we stand, whilst indulging the thought that a time is appointed when the cravings of the heart and of the intellect will be satisfied, and the enigma of our own and the world's existence be solved."—pp. 486, 487, 488, 489.

There are several things in this book to which we cannot assent; some things we should regard as errors. But when the whole work is examined, a very high praise must needs be granted to it, whether we agree or disagree with

the writer. It is marked by candor, faithful research, good sense, and a love of truth to a degree almost unequalled in theological works. Nothing is conceded; nothing forced. It is free from sneers and denunciations. We see in it neither the scorn of the Pyrrhonist, nor the heartless blasphemy of the bigot. It is cool, manly, and tranquil. Sometimes the author rises to a touching pathos and real eloquence. Love of man, and reverence for man's Maker, are conspicuous in its pages; and we thank him heartily for the service he has done the Christian world by the timely publication of a book so serene and manly.

But what is to be the effect of such publications, in this sickly nineteenth century? Some men appear to heed not the signs of the times, nor to notice that the waters of theology are getting troubled in all corners of the world. One effect is obvious. Some will decry human reason altogether, and go back as far as possible into the darkness, seeking to find the Kingdom of Heaven in the past. It is not easy to understand all of the numerous classes of men, who take that course. But is the matter to end in the publication of their books; in the retrograde movements of some timid or tenacious men, of some pious men and some pharisees? They know little of the past, who will hazard such a conjecture. Four centuries ago it was contended, that the vulgate Latin version of the Bible was divine, and the infallible word of God. How many men in Europe now think it so? In the seventeenth century men contended that the Hebrew vowel points were ancient and divine; that the Alexandrian version of the Old Testament was made by miraculous help from on high. But the vowel points and the Alexandrian version have gone to their proper place. Now some one will contend, that the miraculous part of the History of Jesus of Nazareth is not worthy of belief; that the Christ, so far as we can learn, was a man, born as we all are, tried and tempted like the rest of us; man's brother, not his master; that his inspiration was only supernatural, in the sense that all truth is of God; that the Bible is divine so far as true, but no farther, and has no more right to bind and to loose than any other collection of books equally good. New questions will be asked, and will get answered. It is not many years since Transubstantiation and "the Real Presence" were

subjects of great dispute. But they have gone their way; and the windy war they once provoked seems as foolish to us — who happily live some thousands of miles from Oxford — as our contentions, logomachies, and skiomachies, will appear in the next century. No doubt in a hundred years the work of Mr. Hennell, that of Dr. Strauss, and many others of our day, will be turned over with a smile, at the folly of an age, when such books were needed; when Christians would not believe a necessary and everlasting truth, unless it were accompanied and vouched for by a contingent and empirical event, which they presumed to call a miracle! Well they might smile; but such as live in our day can scarcely see the ludicrous features of the matter. It is said to be dangerous to be wise before one's time, and truly it is scarcely decorous to be merry before it.

We cannot dismiss this work of Mr. Hennell without mentioning another from his pen, which forms a sort of sequel to the first, we mean his *Christian Theism*,* a work of singular beauty and worth. We will content ourselves with a few extracts.

"With no hostility, then, towards Christ and Christianity may the Theist renounce his faith in miracles and prophecy; and without inconsistency may he be willing that the long train of associations which Christianity possesses with the history, the literature, the poetry, the moral and religious feelings of mankind, should long contribute their powerful influences in behalf of the cause of human improvement. Let all benefactors of mankind continue to look to Jesus as their forerunner in this great cause, and recognize a kindred mind in the Galilean who preached lessons of wisdom and benevolence in an early age of the world, and fell a sacrifice to the noble idea of introducing a kingdom of heaven upon earth. Let the good Samaritan still be cited as the example of humanity; the passover-supper be remembered as the farewell of Jesus to his friends; and God be worshipped under the character which he attributed to him, — the Father in heaven. Let painting and music still find solemn themes in the realities and fables relating to Jesus; let feasts and holydays still take their names from the events of his life, our time be dated from his birth, and our temples be surmounted by his cross.

* *Christian Theism*, by the Author of *An Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity*. London: Smallfield and Son, 69 Newgate Street. 1839.

"Christianity, then, has been neither evil nor useless; but out of it will proceed a further mental growth. The religion of Egypt, Judaism, Christianity, and the more advanced system, which at a future time may, by the appearance of some remarkable individual, or combination of events, come to be designated by another name,—are all so many successive developments of the religious principle, which, with the progress of mankind, will assume a form continually approaching nearer to perfect truth. And in proportion as other religions make the same approximation, it will be gradually recognized that God hath made all nations of one mind, as well as of one blood, to dwell upon all the face of the earth."—pp. 18, 19.

"In what manner do we know a man best and most thoroughly?—By his appearance? No—By his conversation? Better; but not so well as by experiencing his conduct in a long series of deeds. These speak in the surest manner; they speak to our moral and intellectual senses; and thus may we know thoroughly him whom we have never seen or heard.

"And thus does God chose to speak to man—by *deeds*. A more subtle mode of communication than the brightest vision or the softest whisper; but, to the thinking, more refined, more pleasing, more intelligible. Let children look for cherubim, and rhapsodists for voices from heaven; mature reason and feeling appreciate more highly Works of beauty and beneficence. In what language should God have spoken to men from heaven, or written his message in the sky? In Hebrew! In Greek! In Sanscrit! He has chosen his own language; and has he not well chosen? Does not the rose or the hyacinth speak as plainly as could any noun or participle, the verdure running before the breeze exceed the sense of any aorist, and the star rising above the wood convey more than any Hebrew point? God can do without *hiphil* and *hophal*, without *pluperfect* and *paulo-post* future: he is perfect in the language of signs, and the whole material creation is his symbol-picture to all ranks of intelligence."—pp. 37, 38.

"With this Scripture we may be well content; and knowing that here it is appointed for us to learn all we can and ought to know of God, his nature, and his will, cease to regret the loss of that strange existence which made a capricious covenant with Abraham, or of the voice which delivered to Moses moral precepts, intermingled with directions concerning the fringe of the tabernacle and knobs of the candlestick, or of the Being who declared himself at one time long suffering and gracious, and at another denounced heavy punishments for sparing the wives and children of the vanquished. A more refined conception followed these, in so far as man's expanding mind began to

catch the tone and spirit of nature. But nature is more durable than man's words, whether conveyed through other men's memories, or by paper and parchment. We can appeal to her direct, without help from any translator or expounder, besides our own head and heart. The God whom she proclaims is a certainty in a far higher degree than any God revealed to us through distant records, for the pledges of his existence are the things around us and within us every moment, free from all suspicion of forgery, delusion, or imposture."—pp. 53.

"Honored be the spirits which have anticipated such a religion of nature, and depicted the Cause of the universe in this attractive form. The lower feelings found in the godhead a mere Jupiter Tonans, a vindictive and jealous tyrant of heaven, the partial protector of a family or chosen nation. But more enlarged thought and higher feeling described him as the King and Father of men, Jupiter greatest and best. Especially honored be he who loved to contemplate, and to address, the unseen Mind as the Father in heaven, hearing and having compassion on all men; and who taught men to avail themselves of this refuge for sorrow. Whatever else he were, he was one of those who have helped to raise and refine, as well as to strengthen, human nature. Philosophy sitting calmly in the schools, or walking at ease in the groves, could not do all that men require; the despised Galilean, with his religion of sorrow, gave strength where philosophy left them weak, and completed the armor of the mind. It was reserved for a persecuted man of a persecuted nation to open the divine depths of sorrow, and to direct men towards the hidden riches of their nature in abysses where, at the first entrance, all appeared barren gloom."—p. 60.

"The distinction between God's works and God's word no longer exists. They are the same. His works are his word. No longer need the mind which seeks its Creator be cramped within the limits of a written volume. O thou, whose earliest conceptions of a creative intelligence awakened by the sight of a wonderful world, and, seeking for further expansion, have been directed to the so-called word of God as the proper fountain of this high knowledge, where the sublimest ardor was to be satisfied, and the great idea fully developed,—hast thou never experienced something like disappointment, when, turning wearily over many pages of the boasted revelation, thou hast found but little to respond to thy nascent desires of truth, and timidity, half self-accusing, asked thyself, Can this really be that loudly extolled book of Revelation, which is to instruct men fully concerning God and his ways? Is it indeed so superior to the instruction of nature, that it deserves to be called pre-eminently

the Word of God? I find here and there high thoughts and beautiful conceptions, which shew that between the Nile and the Euphrates, as well as elsewhere, men possessed a nature capable of being moved occasionally to the contemplation of the mighty Cause of heaven and earth; but do these ancient writers really impart knowledge concerning him beyond the reach of all other sages, and speak in strains unequalled by any other muse? Alas! they seldom sustain my mind long in that high region which it was seeking; but drag it down into an earthly atmosphere of low trifling thoughts, petty local interests, and individual or national resentments. This, the book to which stupendous Nature itself was only the preface!—which the Creator of sun and skies has thought it worth while to attest by special messages and inspirations! Neither its genealogies, histories, nor poems, satisfy my want. The spirit of adoration seems to be, by long perusal of this volume, excluded from the great temple of the universe, and compressed into the holy ark of Israel, or into an upper chamber at Jerusalem. Can this book really be the highest field of human study and thought? There must be some mistake.

“Rejoice, and set thy mind free; there has been a great mistake. The book, as well as thyself, was injured by the false pretensions set up on its behalf; and the workings of the *Human* mind in remote ages, in themselves deeply interesting, rendered ridiculous by being extolled into oracles of the *Divine*. Cease to weary thyself in following Israel through the desert, and in pondering each supposed weighty sentence of prophets and apostles. Neither Moses nor Samuel, Isaiah nor Zechariah, nor Jesus, nor Paul, nor John, can speak more of God than they themselves have learned from the sources which he has placed within the reach of all, nature and man's own mind. But look up around, and say if man may not be well satisfied with these; and if in Orion and the Pleiades, in the green earth and its copious productions, and especially in the Godlike Human Mind itself, manifested in art, science, poetry, and action, God has not provided eloquent and intelligible evangelists.”—pp. 65 to 67.

“Jesus made *virtue* the chief qualification for partaking of the kingdom of heaven. To love God and one's neighbor, was to be not far from the kingdom of God. And he laid particular stress on virtues of the meek and benevolent kind. Blessed are the *meek*, for they shall inherit the earth.....Blessed are the *peacemakers*, for they shall be called the children of God..... Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Those who in spirit are like little children, rather than the contenders for greatness, are

fit for the kingdom of God. ‘By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another.’ ‘Love your enemies.’ In all this, Jesus accords strikingly with the most advanced morality of the present age, which admits that the prevalence of these dispositions is the most essential requisite to the improvement of the world.”—p. 10.

P.