

367
73

A
SUMMARY
—
OF THE

EVIDENCES

OF

NATURAL AND REVEALED

RELIGION.

DESIGNED FOR YOUNG PERSONS.

BY A. CLARKE, A. M.
PRECEPTOR OF SALEM STREET ACADEMY, BOSTON.

“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

“Search the Scriptures.”

PETER.
JESUS CHRIST.

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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT

[U. S.]

District Clerk's Office.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the eleventh day of October, A. D. 1814, and in the thirty ninth year of the Independence of the United States of America, *James Clarke* of the said District, has deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Author in the words following, to wit: "*A Summary of the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion. Designed for Young Persons. By J. Clarke, A. M. Preceptor of Salem Street Academy, Boston. 'He ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.' PETER. 'Search the Scriptures'—evangelist's exhortation.*" In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an Act entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical, and other prints."

W. M. S. SHAW,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

PREFACE.

THE following summary was originally compiled for the youth under my immediate instruction. Hoping it may be useful to others of the rising generation, by exciting their attention to the subject of religion, furnishing them with weapons to repel the attacks of infidelity, and enabling them “always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in them,” it is now presented to the public.

A. C.

Boston, Oct. 1814.

SUMMARY.

Question. WHAT evidence have we of the existence of God ?

Answer. Our senses teach us, that there is a God, who created, and who sustains and governs the world. We see trees and plants springing from seeds, growing to maturity, and producing flowers and fruit ; we observe the alternate succession of day and night, and the regular motions of the sun, moon and stars ; and it is impossible to account for these appearances, without ascribing them to the agency of a Supreme Being, of infinite power and wisdom.

Q. Why may not these appearances be ascribed to chance ?

A. Because they exhibit evident marks of design. If an earthen vessel, or the most simple and rude hut, should be discovered in the wilderness, or a solitary desert, the most skeptical philosopher would immediately conclude, that some rational, intelligent being had been there. It would be impossible to persuade any rational mind, that an exquisite and complicated machine, a watch or clock, for instance, could be the production of chance. But the greatest human skill is unable to make a single plant, that shall grow and produce flowers and seeds, from which other plants shall proceed. If a plant cannot be produced by the *art of man*, much less can it be by *chance*. And, if chance cannot produce a single plant, it certainly cannot have produced the world and all it contains.

Q. Is the belief in a Supreme Being universal ?

A. There is no nation, however ignorant and barbarous, that does not believe the existence of some superior, invisible being, which they worship. Some nations have

been discovered, which have no cities, houses or gardens; ignorant of the most useful arts and sciences; and very different in manners, institutions and customs; yet all agree in having some god to worship. We cannot account for this universal belief, unless it has been impressed upon the mind by Deity himself.

Q. Have there never been atheists, who disbelieved the existence of God?

A. Some of the ancient philosophers were reckoned atheists, because they endeavoured to prove the folly and absurdities of the heathen worship; and denied the sun, and moon, and idols to be God. A few have avowed their disbelief in the existence of God, and ascribed all things to chance. But such persons must be considered as monsters in the moral world: There never was an atheist, who had a full and abiding belief, that "there is no God." Though some may declare such a belief, when they apprehend no danger to be near them, yet when alone they have their doubts; and when exposed to some dreadful evil, from which no human aid can deliver them, they always cry to God for mercy and assistance. It is their wish, but not their belief, that there is no God.

Q. What has been the moral character of those, who have denied the existence of God?

A. All, who have denied the existence of God, are persons of immoral and wicked lives; to whom the idea of a future state of rewards and punishments is dreadful. A guilty conscience will not allow them to hope for happiness in a future state of retribution; therefore they endeavour to make their belief conform to their interest and wishes.

Q. Though the world cannot be the production of chance, what evidence have we that it is not eternal?

A. The most ancient history informs us, that the world was created about six thousand years ago; and amongst most people, barbarous as well as civilized, there are traditions to the same effect. These traditions must be ascribed to some cause; but none can be more rational, than the fact which they transmit. There are no monuments, or memorials, by which the existence of

the human race can be traced back to a period earlier than that, when Moses informs us they were created. Had they been eternal, it is highly probable, that some traces of them might be found in a much earlier period.

Q. Can the useful arts and sciences be traced to their origin?

A. Most of the useful arts and sciences, such as could not be lost after they were once known, on account of their utility and constant use, can be traced from their origin, through various degrees of improvement, to their present state. And if the human race is eternal, it has existed till within a few thousand years, in a condition, but little superiour to the brute. But it is incredible, that all the arts and sciences that are now known, should be discovered within a few years by a race of beings, that had existed millions of ages in total ignorance of such arts, as seem to be necessary for their preservation and comfort.

Q. What is religion?

A. Religion is that general habit of reverence to God, which inclines us to worship and serve him, in such a manner as we conceive most agreeable to his will, so as to procure his favour and blessing.

Q. What is natural religion?

A. Natural religion is that knowledge of God, and of the duties he requires of his creatures, which is taught by reason, improved by consideration and experience, without the help of revelation.

Q. What evidence is there of a Divine Providence in the government of the world?

A. Very remarkable calamities have sometimes befallen wicked men, apparently as a punishment for their sins; and good men have sometimes been as remarkably protected and prospered. Miracles have been performed, which no human power could accomplish. When Moses lifted up his rod over the red sea, the waters were divided and rolled away to the right and left, so that the Israelites passed through on dry ground. A cloud and a pillar of fire guided the Israelites through the wilderness. Three Jews, by order of the king of Babylon, were thrown in-

to a furnace heated to that degree, that the officers who threw them in were destroyed by the heat; but these Jews were taken out the next day alive and unhurt; not even a single hair of their heads being singed. Jesus Christ by a word healed diseases, and even restored the dead to life. Events, naturally in the highest degree improbable, have been foretold long before they happened; among which the destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent state of the Jews may be reckoned the most remarkable.

Q. What does natural religion teach us, concerning the nature and attributes of God?

A. It teaches us, that he is self-existent and eternal. He is self-existent, otherwise he must have had a creator, and consequently a superiour; but by God we mean the Supreme Being. If he is self-existent, he must be eternal; for it is altogether inconceivable that any being should *begin* to exist without a cause or creator. He must also possess infinite power; for he who made all things, and is, consequently, the source of power, must be almighty. His infinite goodness and wisdom are manifested in the works of creation and providence. He is also omniscient and knows all things past, present and future; for he who made all things must know all things.

Q. What does reason teach us concerning a future state of rewards and punishments?

A. In this life good men are sometimes persecuted by the wicked, on account of their good deeds, and left to pine in poverty and misery; while the wicked are often prosperous, and have an abundance of the good things of this life, and riot in the enjoyment of what they have taken from the honest and virtuous by fraud and violence. From the justice of God we infer, that there will be a future state of existence, where virtue will be rewarded and vice punished. This argument is strengthened by those natural hopes, which most good men have, of a state of future happiness; and by those natural fears, of a future state of punishment and misery, which disturb the generality of wicked men.

Q. What duties to God does natural religion teach us?

A. Reverence, love, and obedience. We are bound to reverence and worship God, for his infinite perfections: to love and obey him, because he has created and preserved us, and because we are dependant on him for all that we possess or enjoy.

Q. Have all nations in all ages entertained just and worthy notions of God?

A. Though a belief in the existence of some supreme being or beings, that govern the world and control events, is and ever has been universal, yet many nations in every age have been grossly ignorant of the nature of the one true God and of the worship he requires of his creatures. Some nations, that had made great progress in the arts and sciences, entertained absurd and shocking notions in religion. They supposed a multitude of gods and goddesses, to which they ascribed the basest passions, that ever disgraced human nature; and they had no firm belief of the immortality of the soul and future rewards and punishments.

Q. Did they worship these imaginary deities?

A. They did; and many of their solemn religious ceremonies and acts of devotion were scenes of the grossest sensuality and licentiousness. Others were attended with the most savage and cruel superstitions, and sometimes even with human sacrifices. They also worshipped dead men and women, birds and beasts; insects and reptiles, especially the serpent; together with an infinite number of idols, made of gold, silver, wood and stone.

Q. What was the moral conduct of these idolaters?

A. They were addicted to the most shocking and abominable vices; and from the testimony of cotemporary heathen writers, there is abundant reason to believe, that the description, which St. Paul has given of the ancient pagans, is literally true. "They were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, uncleanness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant

breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

Q. Is not natural religion sufficient to restrain men from vice and guide them to happiness?

A. It was the opinion of those, who had no other guide, that it is not sufficient. The wisest among the heathen philosophers thought there were no hopes of reforming the morals of men, unless God should send some person, divinely inspired, for that purpose. And, from considering the moral state of the world, they thought a divine revelation of God's will necessary; and that there was a great probability, that such revelation would be granted.

Q. Were there no wise and good men among the pagan Greeks and Romans, who had better notions of religion and morality than the great mass of the people?

A. There were some wise, and, comparatively, good men, who entertained more worthy notions of God and religion, and embraced a better system of morals, than the rest of the world. These preserved themselves, in some degree, unpolluted from the general corruption of the times. But the notions, which even these philosophers entertained of God and his worship, were erroneous and imperfect. With respect to the great and important doctrines of the immortality of the soul, a future state of distribution of rewards and punishments, they were full of doubt and uncertainty. They were desirous of living in a future state; but many of them did not confidently expect it.

Q. Were these wise men able to reform the morals of the people among whom they lived?

A. They were not. Their own ideas of God and religion were not clear and distinct; and their own examples, sometimes, instead of enforcing their precepts, tended to counteract them. They were destitute of the sanctions of religion, the rewards and punishments of a future state, which are the most effectual restraint upon the passions and vices of mankind, to enforce their doctrines.

Q. Has any person ever appeared who pretended to a divine commission to instruct and reform mankind?

A. About eighteen hundred years ago, when there was a general expectation of some divine personage, a person called Jesus Christ did actually appear, asserting, that he "came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him;" which was, to "call sinners to repentance;" that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He asserted that he was the Messias, which is called Christ, of whom Moses wrote. This person established a religion, which from him is called the Christian religion, and which has been professed by great numbers of persons from that time down to the present.

Q. What evidence have we, that this person was not an impostor?

A. If we consider the purity of his moral character, the nature of his religion, the miracles he performed, the ancient prophecies that were fulfilled in him, and the prophecies which he himself uttered, we cannot suspect him to be an impostor.

Q. What was his moral character?

A. The most perfect the world ever saw. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." Even his enemies were compelled to acknowledge they could find no fault in him. Though the Jews long sought an accusation against him to destroy him, they could find none; and they finally crucified him upon a charge of blasphemy, because he had said, "hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." He was not only without fault, but he possessed and practised every virtue. Towards his Father in heaven, he expressed the most ardent love, the most fervent and rational devotion, and displayed in his whole conduct, the most absolute resignation to his will, and obedience to his commands. He was kind and tender hearted, and full of compassion to the human race.

Q. What was the employment of his life?

A. The great and constant employment of his life was, to do good to the souls and bodies of men. He healed diseases, cured infirmities, corrected errors, removed prejudices, promoted piety, justice, charity, peace, and

harmony among men; and finally gave his life a ransom for many. "He died for all, that they which live should not, henceforth, live unto themselves, but unto him, who died for them;" and when in the agonies of death upon the cross, his prayer for his enemies was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is impossible to suppose such a person could be a deceiver.

Q What was the nature of his religion?

A The most perfect and sublime ever offered to mankind. The sublimity of its doctrines and the excellence of its moral precepts, render it infinitely superior to every other system of religion and morality. And as the Author of it was born of obscure parents and destitute of the advantages of education, we believe he spake truth when he said, "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I say these things. And he that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

Q What miracles did Christ perform?

A He healed the sick; gave sight to the blind; hearing to the deaf; the power of speech to the dumb, and even restored the dead to life. He also fed great multitudes with a small quantity of food; changed water into wine; commanded the winds and the seas, and they obeyed him.

Q How do miracles prove that Christ was not an impostor?

A A miracle is an action, or event, superior to the general and known laws of nature; and cannot be brought about without the Divine agency, or permission. Christ wrought miracles expressly in confirmation of his Divine mission and authority; but it is absurd to suppose God would permit miracles to confirm error and falsehood. We conclude therefore he was not a deceiver.

Q Under what circumstances were these miracles performed?

A They were performed in open day and in public places; in presence of the enemies, as well as followers of Christ. They were often most critically examined by the Jews, who were compelled to admit the miracles, but as-

cribed them to the agency of demons. "Some of them said, he casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." But nothing can be more absurd, than to charge Satan with working miracles, expressly to establish Christianity and overthrow his own kingdom.

Q. What ancient prophecies were fulfilled in the birth, life and character of Christ?

A. It was foretold concerning Messiah, that he should come before the sceptre departed from Judah, while the second temple was standing, and at the end of four hundred and ninety years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It was foretold, that he should be born of a virgin, of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of David, and in the town of Bethlehem; that he should perform great and beneficial miracles, should be sold for thirty pieces of silver, be scourged and buffeted, die a violent death, and rise again without seeing corruption. All these and many other predictions were exactly fulfilled in Christ, and can apply to no other person that has ever lived. We conclude he is the true Messiah.

Q. What prophecies were delivered by our Saviour?

A. He repeatedly and particularly foretold his own death and the circumstances of it; that he should be betrayed into the hands of his enemies by Judas Iscariot, one of his chosen disciples; that the chief priests and scribes would condemn him to death, and deliver him to the gentiles, to mock and scourge and crucify him; that his disciples would all forsake him and flee, and that one of them would thrice deny him in one night. He likewise foretold his own resurrection on the third day, the future success of the gospel, and the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the gentiles. All these predictions, and many others which he uttered, have been exactly fulfilled.

Q. What evidence have we that these prophecies have been fulfilled?

A. The testimony of sacred and profane history. Josephus, a Jewish historian, has given an exact and circumstantial account of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem; and his description of that terrible calamity ex-

actly corresponds with our Saviour's prophecy. A particular account of other prophecies is contained in the New Testament, a book better authenticated than any other of the same antiquity.

Q. What evidence have we, that the facts related in the New Testament concerning Christ and his religion are true?

A. The writers of the New Testament had the best means of knowing the truth of what they relate, and they had no inducement to deceive others.

Q. How does it appear that they had the best means of information?

A. Two of them, Matthew and John, were the constant companions and attendants of Christ, during his whole ministry. They were present at the scenes they describe, eye-witnesses of the facts and ear-witnesses of the discourses they relate. Mark and Luke, though not apostles, were contemporaries and companions of the apostles, and in habits of intimacy with them and others who were present at the transactions they record. The four gospels were written by those persons whose names they bear; and the Acts of the Apostles were written by Luke. These five books, therefore, were written by persons, who had perfect knowledge of what they relate, and therefore could not be deceived as to facts.

Q. How does it appear that they had no inducement to deceive others, by relating what they knew to be false?

A. They could gain neither pleasure, profit, nor power by it. On the contrary, they were persecuted for the religion they professed and propagated, and suffered the most dreadful evils, even death itself. If therefore they were deceivers, they were deceivers without any apparent motive; without the prospect of any advantage whatever. And not only so, but in opposition to every motive and every advantage, that usually influences the conduct of men. And the religion they preached prohibits falsehood under the severest penalties.

Q. Though the writers of the New Testament had means of correct information, and were honest to relate

the truth, how do we know, that the books of the New Testament have not been materially altered, since they came out of the writers' hands ?

A. That some verbal errors have crept into some manuscripts, there can be no doubt; for the art of printing was not invented, till more than thirteen hundred years after these books were written; and all the copies extant before printing was known, were transcribed with a pen: and that some verbal disagreement between different copies should be discovered, is by no means strange. Such disagreement is found in different copies of ancient poets and historians, as well as of the New Testament. No person, however, has ever attempted, or been able to prove, that any important part of these writings, especially any doctrine or important historical fact, has been altered. Indeed it is impossible that any such alteration can have been made: for as soon as the original writings came out of the hands of their authors, many copies were immediately taken and sent to all the different churches. These copies were publicly read in the religious assemblies of the first Christians. They were also very soon translated into many different languages, and distributed into all parts of the known world. Quotations have been made from different parts of the New Testament by a succession of writers, from the earliest age of the church down to the present time. These quotations substantially agree with the text of the sacred writings, as we now find it. Copies of the New Testament, taken in different ages, still remain: and these all agree in whatever is essential, or important.

Q. Are the facts related in the New Testament corroborated by other testimony ?

A. Many of the facts related by the evangelists have been related and admitted by Jewish and Roman historians; such as the star that appeared at our Saviour's birth; the journey of the wise men to Bethlehem; Herod's murder of the infants under two years old; many particulars concerning John the Baptist and Herod; the crucifixion of our Saviour under Pontius Pilate; and the earthquake and miraculous darkness that attended it.

Even many of the miracles, which Jesus himself wrought, particularly curing the lame and blind, and casting out devils, have been admitted by some of the earliest and most bitter enemies of Christianity.

Q. What evidence have we that the doctrines of Christianity are true?

A. These doctrines were delivered by our Saviour, who, as has been already shewn, was a teacher sent from God, and recorded by holy men, who were guided by the Spirit of Truth. That is, these writers were so far under the influence of the Spirit of Truth, as to be prevented from relating any thing false, or omitting any important truth.

Q. What evidence have we, that the writers of the New Testament were inspired?

A. Their own testimony. That they were men of truth and approved of God, there can be no doubt; for they wrought miracles and uttered prophecies; and were allowed by their enemies to be unexceptionable in their moral characters. These writers tell us, that Christ promised to send them the Comforter, who would guide them into all truth: that on the day of Pentecost, in conformity to this promise, the Holy Ghost visibly descended upon the apostles, and “they were full of the Holy Ghost, speaking as the Spirit gave them utterance.” St. Paul declared, that the gospel he preached had not been received of man, but taught by the revelation of Jesus Christ. And, as there is the strongest reason to believe, that St. Paul and the other apostles spake the truth, there can be no doubt that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

Q. Is there any other evidence, that the writers of the New Testament were inspired?

A. The sublimity of the doctrines and the purity and superiour excellence of the moral precepts of the gospel, are proof that they had a divine original. Such important information, and such just and noble ideas of God and religion, as the gospel contains, can be found in no other book. The Author of these was, apparently, the son of a mechanic, living in an obscure corner of the

world, till he commenced the great work of instructing and reforming mankind. His assistants in this work were a few unlettered fishermen. It is impossible that these persons should, without divine aid, produce such perfect and incomparable rules of life as those of the gospel; so vastly superior in purity, perspicuity, and general usefulness to all the moral lessons of all the wisest philosophers that ever lived. Therefore we conclude, that these doctrines “came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?”

Q. What are the fundamental doctrines of the gospel?

A. That there is one God of infinite power, wisdom, justice, and mercy, who created, preserves, and governs the world, whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, and without whose notice not a sparrow cometh to the ground—that the love of him is the source of all virtue—that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned”—that “God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him;” “neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved”—that the soul does not die with the body—that “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust”—that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil”—that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind, and our neighbours as ourselves.

Q. Can any argument in favour of the truth and divine origin of Christianity be drawn from the manner in which it was propagated?

A. The rapid and successful propagation of the gospel by the first teachers of it, is proof that they were favoured with divine assistance. The first assembly of Christians, after our Saviour’s crucifixion, consisted of but one hundred and twenty. About a week afterwards, three thousand were added in one day; and the number soon increased to five thousand. Within thirty years the

gospel was spread throughout all parts of the Roman empire, and even to Parthia and India. All this happened, notwithstanding those, who preached, or publicly embraced the gospel, were harrassed and persecuted, even unto death, with the most unrelenting cruelty. As all human means of success was against them, it is clear, almost to demonstration, that they were favoured with divine assistance.

Q. What does the Old Testament contain ?

A. That part of the Bible called the Old Testament contains history, poetry, moral and religious precepts, and prophecies, written by different persons, at different times, and collected into one volume by the Jews.

Q. What evidence have we, that the books of the Old Testament were written by those persons, whose names they bear ?

A. They have always been considered as the writings of those persons, by the whole Jewish nation, who were deeply interested in their authenticity, and had the best means of knowing the truth : and no proof to the contrary has ever been produced.

Q. What evidence have we, that these books have not been altered, since they were written ?

A. The original manuscripts were carefully preserved by the Jews for a long time. A copy of the law was kept in the ark, and read publicly every seven years, at the feast of tabernacles ; the law was also frequently read in every Jewish family. A copy of the five books of Moses, taken by the Samaritans, the inveterate enemies of the Jews, is still extant, and it agrees in every material point with the Jewish copy. As all the copies of the Old Testament, that were in existence before the invention of printing, were written with a pen, some *verbal* disagreement between different copies is to be expected. - By comparing different manuscripts many various readings of a trivial kind have been discovered, but scarcely any of real consequence. Though the learned Dr. Kennicott has compared nearly seven hundred Hebrew manuscripts, he does not find the alteration of a single important passage in the Old Testament necessary. From his talents we

derive certain knowledge of the agreement of the copies of the ancient scriptures, now extant in their original language, with one another, and with our Bibles.

Q. When was the Old Testament translated into Greek?

A. About two hundred and seventy years before Christ, the Old Testament was translated into Greek. This version, called the Septuagint, agrees in every essential article with the present Hebrew copies. As copies of the scriptures were dispersed into various parts of the world, and translated into different languages, and as all copies that have hitherto been discovered agree in every material instance, it is incredible that any material alteration has been made.

Q. What evidence have we, that the prophetic part of the Old Testament has not been corrupted?

A. From the prophecies we prove that Jesus is the Messiah. If the Jews had dared to alter any of the prophecies, their implacable hatred of Christ and his followers would, undoubtedly, have induced them to make such alterations as would prevent our proving this fact. Although our Saviour brought many heavy charges against the scribes and pharisees, yet he never once accused them of altering their sacred writings. The Saviour of the world, who came "from the Father of truth to bear witness of the truth," in his last instructions to his disciples, declared, "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." By this declaration, our Lord confirmed not only the genuineness of the scriptures, but their divine inspiration. He declared they contained prophecies, which must be fulfilled; and God alone can enable men to foretel future events.

Q. Are the historical facts related in the Old Testament confirmed by the testimony of heathen writers?

A. The creation of the world, as described by Moses—the formation of the sun, moon and stars, and afterwards of man—the completion of this work in six days—the destruction of the world by a deluge—the circumstances of the ark and the dove—the rite of circumcision—the des-

truction of Sodom by fire, and many other facts, are expressly mentioned, or plainly alluded to, in several pagan authors of the highest antiquity. Julian, the apostate, a very bitter enemy of the Jews and Christians, acknowledged there were many persons among the Jews divinely inspired; and that fire descended from heaven on the sacrifices of Moses and Elijah.

Q. Are there no bad characters and wicked actions recorded in the Old Testament?

A. There are; but these are mentioned as historical facts and by no means approved, or proposed as examples for imitation. The sacred books are full of very sublime representations of God and his attributes; and very excellent rules for the conduct of life, and examples of every virtue that can adorn human nature.

Q. What was the state of the world when these books were written?

A. All nations, even the wisest and most learned, except the Jews, were grossly ignorant of God and religion. They were wholly given to idolatry; they were worshipping the host of heaven, deceased men, animals and idols, and indulging themselves in the most abominable vices.

Q. Were the Jews skilled in philosophy and the fine arts?

A. In philosophy and the fine arts they were much inferior to the heathen nations; but infinitely superior to the most learned and polite nations, in their knowledge of God and every thing relating to God and religion. This superiority cannot be accounted for, unless it be admitted, that they were instructed in these things by God himself, or by persons commissioned and inspired by him: that they were really favoured with these divine revelations recorded in the Old Testament.

Q. How has the truth of the prophecies contained in the Old Testament been proved?

A. By their exact fulfilment in subsequent ages.

Q. To what do they relate?

A. They relate to Babylon, Edom, Egypt, Tyre and Sidon, to our saviour and the Jews.

Q. What was prophesied of Babylon?

A. Of Babylon the prophet Jeremiah said, "Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing without an inhabitant." This prophecy, which was uttered when that great and splendid city was one of the wonders of the world, has long since been fulfilled. A traveller who visited Asia Minor about fifty years ago, says, "There is not a stone to tell where Babylon was situated."

Q. What was the prophecy relating to Edom?

A. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, of whom it was said, "Thou shalt serve thy brother." And "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever;" and again, "There shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau, for the Lord hath spoken it." The Edomites were, at different times, conquered and made tributaries to the Jews, who were the descendants of Jacob, and at last, having become incorporated with Arabs and Jews, their name was abolished.

Q. What was the prophecy concerning Egypt?

A. Of Egypt, once a populous and powerful country, the seat of learning, wealth and magnificence, it was said, "It shall be the basest of kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations." This country has, for a long time, been tributary to the Turks, and its weak and superstitious inhabitants are in a miserable and degraded condition.

Q. What did the prophet predict concerning Tyre and Sidon?

A. Of Tyre, "whose merchants were then princes, whose traffickers the honourable of the earth," it was said, "Tyre shall be forgotten;" "They shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: it shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea." This once renowned commercial city is now a miserable village inhabited by a few fishermen. Sidon was one of the most ancient cities in the world, and once surpassed Tyre itself. Of this famous city it was said, "I will send pestilence and blood into her streets, and the wounded

shall be judged in the midst of her, by the sword upon her on every side." This was accomplished when the wretched inhabitants, upon the approach of the king of Persia with an army, set fire to their own houses, and forty thousand, with their wives and children, perished in the flames. The harbour is now filled with sand and the ancient pavements covered with dirt and rubbish.

Q. What prophecies relate to our Saviour?

A. Concerning Messiah it was said, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel" — "There shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious" — "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" — "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" — "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" — "He was oppressed and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth" — "He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken" — "They pierced my hands and my feet" — "Thou wilt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption." All these prophecies were evidently fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Q. What was foretold concerning the Jews?

A. Of the Jews it was said, "They should be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth—become an astonishment, a proverb, and a bye-word, among all nations whither the Lord should lead them—should abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod and teraphim." No description of the Jews, written at the present day, could be a more exact picture of their condition for many ages past, than these prophetic descriptions; especially that of Moses, given more than three thousand years ago.

Q. How do we know that these prophecies were not written after the events happened?

A. They were recorded in the books of the Old Testament which existed long before the events occurred. It is acknowledged by the Jews, the avowed enemies of Christ and his religion, that these prophecies were in those books, exactly as we now find them, many hundred years before Christ came into the world. The Jews have made many attempts to explain away the prophecies, but have never denied their authenticity.

Q. How may the resurrection of Christ from the dead be considered?

A. The resurrection of Christ from the dead may be considered as "the seal and confirmation of his divinity and of the truth of his religion." For had he not been what he pretended to be, "the Son of God," "whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world," "that he should bear witness unto the truth," it is incredible that God should raise him from the dead, and by so doing give sanction to imposture, and involve millions of the most virtuous of the human race in a cruel and fatal delusion. But as he did actually restore him to life, he has set his seal to the divinity which he claimed, and acknowledged him, in the most public and authoritative manner, to be his "beloved Son in whom he is well pleased."

Q. Did our Saviour ever appeal to his resurrection as a proof of his divine mission?

A. When he cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple and the Jews required of him a sign, that is a miraculous proof, that he had authority from God to do these things, he said to them, "destroy this temple," meaning his body, "and in three days I will raise it up." "When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had said."

Q. What is a natural conclusion from reviewing the arguments in proof of natural religion?

A. That "the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: so that they are without excuse," who say "there is no God:" or "when they knew God glorified him not

as God: but became vain in their imaginations: and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed forever."

Q. What may we conclude upon reviewing the evidences of revealed religion?

A. We must conclude that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God;" that it is not the invention of man, for had it been it would have come to nought long before this time. When we consider with what zeal and violence Christianity has been repeatedly attacked by argument, wit, and ridicule, and yet has withstood them all, and has been believed and embraced by the greatest and best men in every age, we cannot doubt the literal fulfilment of our Saviour's prediction, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

Q. Though it be true that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, of what use is it?

A. It "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

Q. How must it be received in order to enjoy these benefits?

A. We must believe it to be the word of God, and we must make it the rule of our life. "He that believeth," so that his faith regulates his conduct, "shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned."