



THE ORIGIN OF THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



BEING

*A Candid Examination of the Materials out of
which Historic Christianity is built*

BY

“INVESTIGATOR”

“Come now, let us reason together.”—ISAIAH I. 18.

“Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee.”—LUKE XIX. 22.

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Emmett F. Fields

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The Origin of the Christian Church

CHAPTER I

To write a perfectly accurate account of events occurring, even in modern times, is by no means an easy task. But whatever difficulties beset such an undertaking, they are as nothing compared to those that encounter the narrator of ancient history. In many cases credulity plays an important part. The credulity of men whose ignorance gave greater sway to their bias has left records that are not reliable. Again, the superstition of others has magnified the most natural occurrences into events supernatural. While in many cases such events owe their origin to the over-fervid imagination of persons of an excitable temperament. The records thus left have to be thoroughly sifted, and tested with others, and then the pruning knife of common sense has to be rigorously applied, to clear away the luxurious growth of exaggeration. Now, in writing ordinary history, there is not that hesitation in thus allowing for

exaggeration, which is met with when dealing with ecclesiastical records. Whenever anything of an out-of-the-way occurrence is alleged to have taken place in mundane affairs, it is at once relegated to the order of myths. But there is one class of history in every nation which is beyond this pale of excision. Let a man, in all honesty of purpose, attempt to cut out any of the believed authentic narratives from the religious history of any nation, and he will at once be met with a storm of abuse. In former times, probably, his life would have been at stake. Nowadays, a rigorous system of boycott would be attempted. And so rigorously has this system been carried out in some cases, that even clergymen in Christian communities do not hesitate to adopt this plan of exclusive dealing towards the man who has the courage of his convictions. They seem so thoroughly enveloped in the fancied righteousness of their own cause, that they can see no righteousness in the conduct of others who differ from them. They make no allowance for the very same belief, *i.e.*, faith or confidence of the heathen in their religion, as they themselves exercise in their own. The heathen is just as firmly convinced of the truth of his religion as any Christian in that of his creed. But ask either to give you an authentic account of the establishment of his religion, and you will find both are depending upon tradition. Tradition is really another name for gossip. This word is composed of two words, God-sip, signifying relation, connection, alliance, and relation in the service to God. Tradition is information, or belief transmitted without the aid of written or other documents. To ascertain the real facts, that is the actual occurrences, not mere statements, of the origin of any religion, it becomes

essential to approach the inquiry with an unbiassed mind, that is with a mind ready to receive and weigh all classes of evidence.

But superstition, awe, reverence, dread of laying impious hands on things divine, must be scrupulously avoided in an inquiry into the origin of a religion. When weighing the various tales of tradition, care should be taken to ascertain the general state of mind of the community in which such tradition arose. Allowance must be made for the natural ignorance and consequent superstition of mankind in former ages. Superstition is literally a standing still at, a standing in fear of, or amazement at, hence excessive religious fear. And so a religious veneration is attached to what is altogether unworthy of it. Some persons there are who are quite convinced of the superstition of their neighbour, while, at the same time, they themselves are just as superstitious in some other direction. That there must be error in tradition is apparent when the various sects of Christianity and other religions are considered. Christians all unite in condemning the tradition of other religions. And amongst themselves Protestants condemn the traditions of the Church of Rome, and do not hesitate to assert that the early fathers are not quite reliable on matters theological. In how far then can tradition be regarded as reliable? To answer this question is one of the objects of the following treatise. So many different versions have been given of the origin of the Christian religion, that it will be necessary to go somewhat minutely into the history of the first two centuries of the present era. Let us then, in the first place, glance at the general state of learning in Palestine at the beginning of the present era.

In order that we may understand this subject rightly, it will be necessary to see what was the state of the surrounding countries, so far as the system of education was concerned. By system of education is not meant any such modes as prevail with modern countries, but rather what seats of education or learning existed in and around Palestine. The prevailing train of thought was known as Hellenism ; that is, the Greek school of thought was the teacher of the nations. If to this be added the teachings of the Chaldeans, which greatly influenced the Jewish mind during the Babylonian Captivity, it becomes manifest that the inhabitants of Palestine would very naturally be more or less imbued with the doctrines of these two countries. Then, when it is considered that the most wealthy and learned portion of the Jews did not return to Palestine from Babylon, but settled in Alexandria, it may easily be seen that a tinge of Egyptian theology soon coloured their religious doctrines. The great aim of teaching then was philosophical or religious. With the Jew, theology was the one, if not, indeed, the only school of thought.

And so when the various doctrines of theology of those days are examined, it will be found that the fundamental ideas of the Chaldeans, Greeks and Egyptians run through the Jewish doctrines. And this is not to be wondered at. Examine modern theology and it will be found that its doctrines are constantly being amplified, modified, and in some instances discountenanced. The enlarging ideas of the scientific world are slowly but surely sweeping away the old theological superstitions and myths. So we must not be surprised to find the similar levelling ideas of Greece, Egypt and Chaldea colour, tint and change Jewish theology. As to the seats of learning at

the latter end of the pre-Christian era, there is no doubt that very many colleges existed. And in Palestine itself we find colleges of doctors both in Galilee and Mount Carmel. Sephoris, an hour's walk from Nazareth, had its college.* Pliny and Josephus both describe an important city at the head of the Galilean lake, which they call Taricheae, and this is believed to be the Tarkal described by an Egyptian official in his account of his travels in the fourteenth century before the Christian era. The tablets of Tel-el-Amarna prove that communications between the various countries around Palestine was by no means unlimited. When the Roman power supplanted that of Greece, the language of the latter was not stamped out. Horace admits this where he says, 'Captive Greece took captive her rude conqueror!' This refers to the well-known fact that the Greek language was the one the Romans considered it a sign of culture not only to know, but to speak. Then it must not be forgotten that the Jews were, even in the time of Alexander the Great, scattered over the then known world. It is said that so considerable was their number in Alexandria, that at the beginning of our era they numbered in that city one million. Then a large number remained in Babylon after the captivity, while others were to be found in all the important towns of Greece. And all these Jews kept up communications with their brethren in Palestine, and decrees from the Elders or High Priest at Jerusalem were frequently issued to the Jews in various foreign countries.

All this goes to prove that the superstition and theology of other nations had its effect and influence on the minds of the inhabitants of Palestine. And this continued not only down to the beginning of the present

era, but for many centuries after. As to the general state of mind of the people of Palestine and the surrounding countries, from the examination of historians, it is quite clear that superstition governed the thoughts of all. The belief in demonology was universal. Clement of Alexandria, in the third century, tried to account for the teaching of Pythagoras, Plato and other pagan writers through the influence of the Old Testament. Lecky very forcibly shows the absurdities of the fathers in the third century in their controversies with the pagans, where he says, in his *History of European Morals*, in the chapter on the conversion of Rome, as follows:—‘Absurdities of this kind, of which I have given extreme, but by no means the only, examples were usually primarily intended to repel arguments against Christianity, and they are illustrations of the tendency which has always existed in an uncritical age to invent, without a shadow of foundation, the most elaborate theories of explanation rather than recognise the smallest force in an objection. Thus, when the pagans attempted to reduce Christianity to a normal product of the human mind, by pointing to the very numerous pagan legends which were precisely parallel to the Jewish histories, it was answered that the dæmons were careful students of prophecy, that they foresaw with terror the advent of their Divine Conqueror, and that, in order to prevent men from believing in Him, they had invented by anticipation a series of legends resembling the events which were foretold. More frequently, however, the early Christians retorted the accusations of plagiarism, and by forged writings attributed to pagan authors, or by pointing out alleged traces of Jewish influence in genuine pagan writings, they endeavoured to trace through the footsteps of their faith.’

If then in the third and fourth centuries the Christians were so swayed by the firm belief in dæmonology, what hold must not that belief have had two hundred years previously on the minds of men? Must not, therefore, a very great caution be exercised in accepting all the statements of writers of that period concerning events of a supernatural nature? But what is to be the caution when, so far from having to deal with writings of that age, we find we are asked to rely solely upon tradition? To understand what we are asked to do, it is needful to put a case of simple history as an instance. Suppose there were no written records of the events which occurred in the fourteenth century, but that the entire history of that period had been handed down by word of mouth, would that be a reliable record? Just consider how difficult—nay, impossible—it is to get, say, six men to give a similar account of the same event they all witnessed. But let that account be transmitted through, say, four different successive channels, the original narrator of that occurrence would not, in all probability, recognise his own tale, or know that he had witnessed the event therein related. And yet this is only what would happen in one century, for we are assuming four generations to the century, and that the tale only passed through four persons. But it must be borne in mind that even the same man does not repeat the story exactly the same way each time he narrates that story; and, therefore, the chances of exaggeration and inaccuracy, unintentional, no doubt, are increased amazingly when it is considered that, instead of passing through four or five persons, the tale may have been subjected to the varying influences of perhaps a hundred people through whom it was transmitted, and each of these hundred persons' minds dif-

ferred from that of the other ninety-nine in some slight particular. Each narrator might have a mind so plastic that each breath of popular excitement would give the tale a different hue. And then, after all the changes of three centuries and upwards, these various narratives are reduced to writing, and we are asked to accept them as accurate. Say, would the history of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries be accepted as true on such evidence? Now this is all on the supposition that no attempt at fraud has been discovered. But, alas, in the case of Christian records it has to be admitted that forgeries predominate, and, therefore, apart from the difficulty of sifting the chaff from the grain in tradition, the terrible fact of falsehood meets us at the very threshold of our inquiry. The general state of learning in the end of the last and beginning of the present era was altogether based on the Egyptian and Grecian schools of philosophy. Mosheim states that, 'Besides the public worship of the gods, there were certain religious institutions and rites celebrated in secret by the Greeks and several Eastern nations, to which a very small number were allowed access. These were commonly called mysteries, and the persons who desired to be initiated therein were obliged previously to exhibit satisfactory proofs of their fidelity and patience by passing through various trials and ceremonies of the most disagreeable kind. The secret of these institutions was kept in the strictest manner, as the initiated could not reveal anything that passed in them without exposing their lives to the most imminent danger; and that is the reason why at this time we are so little acquainted with the true nature and the real design of these hidden rights.'

It seems, therefore, tolerably clear that the general

tone of Eastern nations was peculiarly adapted to receive tales dealing with the supernatural. The fact of the only writings alleged to be from the pens of the Apostles being couched in the Grecian language goes far to show that Grecian habits to a large extent prevailed in Palestine. We may therefore fairly conclude that the teaching of these mysteries also extended to that country. That two classes of philosophers flourished in Palestine at the commencement of this era, called the Essenes and Therapeutæ, cannot be denied. By some these philosophers have been styled religious fanatics.

That they were a highly devotional class is undoubted. It is even said they were the founders of the monastic system. They were greatly influenced by the teaching of Pythagoras, at least so far as taking sacred writings in an allegorical meaning and observing the mysteries of the Pythagorean school of philosophy may be considered as indicating that influence. This goes to show how far the Grecian school of thought prevailed among the inhabitants of Palestine. And therefore, whatever superstitions we find in Greece, we may reasonably expect to find traces of in Palestine. The people, therefore, were quite ready to believe any story, no matter how improbable, that related to the gods in Greece, and in Palestine to God, the people there being monotheistic. It is necessary to bear this in mind when dealing with the evidence produced in support of the traditions of the first three centuries of our era. It is hard for persons of the present day, trained in a strict school of theology, to even think that the entire foundation of their religion rests solely on tradition. And yet, nevertheless, so it is. But let the matter of evidence be looked at calmly. Treat each witness fairly. Look on the subject as one before a judicial tribunal; only we

must vary the rule applicable to all evidence given before such a court. There no hearsay evidence is admissible. In the inquiry before us, to adhere to such a rule would shorten the inquiry considerably. For then there would be no evidence to give, since theological evidence is at best but second-hand. There is, however, a class of evidence which must be considered. It is the evidence of silence in the works of all the contemporaries living at the time of the alleged foundation of Christianity.

This is not such an insignificant fact as may at first appear. It may be well here to explain the class of evidence it is intended to call for examination. First, what may be called positive testimony will be produced. All the evidence must, from the nature of the case, be documentary, for the founders of Christianity have left no monumental records. Then this must not only be positive but genuine; that is, the document must be undoubtedly the writing of a person who lived at the time of the occurrence he relates, and be personally aware of the truth of the events he records. Secondly, negative evidence will be considered. This is what we have above called the evidence of silence. Then there is the contradiction of a witness by himself. This applies more to the credibility of a witness. Further, there is a class of evidence which must be brought forward—that is the absolutely and wilfully false. Unhappily, of this class there is a large proportion. It seems utterly incongruous that such a state of affairs should exist in a matter of such vital importance as religion. But, alas, in an inquiry of the kind in which we are engaged, the truth must be told if the truth is to be ascertained.

To discover the truth is our object. Let no false notions of what the result may be drive us from a full and true

disclosure. Religion, if it be true, cannot suffer. Better ascertain the truth, and so silence for ever the taunts and sneers of scoffers and others. But it may, nay, will be said, What if religion suffer by the investigation? We answer in all confidence, in perfect trust, Fear not. The Maker of the Universe is not dependent upon the result of our investigation. He has made the universe of such stupendous magnitude, that any investigation as to the foundation of religion on this tiny atom of matter called the earth will not in the slightest degree upset the eternal laws of that universe. Our earth is subject to those same laws. Men have set about investigating the affairs of that universe, and the result has been a vast benefit to mankind. Are we, then, to hesitate about investigating the other branch of the dealings of the Author of that same universe with mankind, namely, religion? And forsooth, because we do not know what may be the result to mankind. The same objection was made to that other inquiry, *i.e.*, the affairs of the universe, and all the then fears have been dissipated. Why then should we anticipate evil and not good to mankind from this investigation? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? was asked of old. Then it was believed the earth was the all-important portion of the universe. Now it is *known* our earth is one of the smaller astrals of the universe. Let us then put aside all fear, and unite in doing our utmost to settle for ever this burning question of the truth of the origin of our religion. Do not think that by avoiding such an investigation you can allay the spirit of inquiry which is abroad. Every journal and publication has, whether pamphlet, book, or periodical, hints or sneers which make men ask what does this mean? And when men begin to ask questions, it is time to make ourselves

up on the subject of their importunity. So far as we can, we shall treat the subject dispassionately. But just as a judge trying human affairs finds it incumbent upon him to point out to the jury any flagrant conduct on the part of the witnesses, so we must be pardoned if at times we fail to display that calmness which perhaps ought to be displayed. Still we, in addressing the jury of mankind, cannot help at times losing that calmness when we find a witness guilty of gross falsehood, if, indeed, not far worse.

CHAPTER II

To the average Christian layman the propositions laid down in this treatise will, no doubt, appear utterly ridiculous. He will perhaps put to anyone who dares to advocate these theories three questions, or counter propositions. Can it be possible that all the divines of the last three hundred years were so deficient in knowledge as not to have studied this aspect of the subject in all its bearings? And are you, the writer, of such vastly superior mental calibre as to have found out what they and all the martyrs of the Reformation failed to ascertain? This thought or question would be the first probably to occur to the ordinary lay mind. Then no doubt would come the suggestion—Is not the world indebted to Christianity for its present civilisation and advancement? And in final overthrow of the pernicious agnostic theory would be heard the self-satisfied exhortation—My dear friend, it is all very fine to pull down, but not so easy to build up. What will you give so soothing, so beneficial, so consolatory to the human mind as Christianity? Now, these questions have never yet been fairly answered; that is, the prejudice of the questioner has been so intense that the replies have not received that careful consideration they so eminently deserve.

To answer these questions fully will require a somewhat particular review of the state of knowledge in former times. Consideration must be given to the general consensus of opinion in events supernatural. The almost universal dread of investigating affairs theological by laymen gave a great impetus to the belief in the supernatural. The men who endeavoured to study chemistry in the Middle Ages, and even after the Reformation, were said to be the emissaries of the Evil One. The term, 'the black art,' was the then usual mode of describing such studies. The learned men of those days were mostly of the theological schools. To doubt was then a crime of the most heinous description. Not one of the then theological writers ever entertained the slightest doubt in the existence of witches and wizards. It was an age in which the entire bias of men's minds was largely influenced by a blind faith in the supernatural. Care must therefore be taken in attaching too much importance to the works of writers of those days, so far as considering those works as proofs of their authors' powers of investigating matters of a delicate historical nature. It is only comparatively in recent years that knowledge on such subjects has become a matter of careful study; and for this simple reason the men of former times had not the materials. Documents and knowledge have recently been acquired of which the writers in former times had not the remotest information. Another point must not be lost sight of, that theology, to be consistent, should never change. The one subject of which it teaches is God, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. The one book with which it deals is claimed to contain God's message to man, and this message theologians for the last sixteen

centuries claim to have been studying ; and the result of that long study is to-day bearing fruit in a most luxurious crop of multifarious and diametrically opposite churches. A list of those churches would fill several pages of this work, and yet each church holds that it alone has God's true message to man ; and when a thinking man contemplates all these divergent churches, is it any wonder of doubt if he gets a feeling of disgust and contempt for theology? Men studying that message of God all those centuries, and apparently just as far from solving its meaning at the end as they were when they commenced.

What was it started the riots in Alexandria which culminated in the cruel death of Hypatia, in the fifth century? God's alleged message to man. What gave rise to those scenes of ignorance, brutality and vice known as the Crusades? God's alleged message to man. And who were the promoters and advisers of, and the gainers in, those wretched excursions? God's alleged divinely appointed messengers to man—the clergy. What ignited the faggots that sent Huss, and twelve months later Jerome of Prague, to join the majority by a cruel death? What caused and fanned the flames of the Inquisition, which have lasted several centuries? What made Calvin burn Servetus? What caused the Thirty Years' War, and others of a kindred class? What put to death as witches so many poor women, from the time of Hypatia to the burning of Bridget Clearey in Clonmel, in the county of Tipperary, in Ireland, in the year of grace 1895? All—all were caused by the so-called message of God to man. Oh, could the message of a fiend have invented and carried into effect anything more calculated to make man say, 'This is not from God?' And amid all this accumulation of the clouds of misery and cruelty, is

there any redeeming ray of light? Is it from ecclesiastical sources? No, certainly not. Science at length took the field and eradicated, to a great extent, superstition from men's minds. And it is science which to-day holds the field, and enables men fearlessly to investigate matters in the search of truth. And thus can be seen a reason why the opinions of men on matters theological in the last and preceding centuries must not allow us to swallow their *ipse dixit* as binding on us. It seems strange that one book written one hundred years ago is still regarded as the best guide for students in the verity of Christianity. That book is Paley's *Evidences*. In every other study the advances of knowledge are such that a book only a few years old is considered obsolete. And in a matter the most vital to man, if the Bible be true, we are to sit still and swallow the statements of men who believed firmly in witchcraft, demonology, and all the other arts called black.

Surely, surely it is time we roused ourselves and investigated for ourselves.

Now, another fallacy, which prevails largely among Christian people, is, that civilisation is the immediate result of their creed. That this is a fallacy we contend. When the researches of antiquarians, Egyptologists and Assyriologists are considered, it becomes apparent that civilisation was established centuries before Christianity. As Professor Sayce says, 'Discovery crowds so quickly on discovery, that the truth of to-day is often apt to be modified or amplified by the truth of to-morrow. A single fresh fact may throw a wholly new and unexpected light upon the results we have already gained, and cause them to assume a somewhat changed aspect. But this is what must happen in all sciences in which there is a

healthy growth, and archæological science is no exception to the rule.'

Maspero, speaking of the advance of the science of medicine in Egypt, in his *Dawn of Civilisation*, thus writes :—

'The use of more than one of these remedies became world-wide ; the Greeks borrowed them from the Egyptians ; we have piously accepted them from the Greeks, and our contemporaries still swallow with resignation "many of the abominable mixtures invented on the banks of the Nile long before the building of the Pyramids."'

Since the Pyramids were built, more than five thousand years ago, we cannot ascribe the invention of medicine to Christianity. Nor can we ascribe to the same source the arts and sciences, since these were well known to the Egyptians more than four thousand years ago. Let anyone look at the photographs of the temples of Egypt, and ask himself—Could such buildings have been erected by barbarians or savages? He will be compelled to answer emphatically, No. And since some of those temples were begun more than eight thousand years ago, one may well ask how far in civilisation must the people have advanced to have the knowledge to erect such stupendous buildings? Again, the discovery of the Nampa image, in California, in the sand of an ancient lake buried beneath the moraine of a glacier two hundred feet thick, which, in its turn, was covered by a layer of lava fifteen feet thick, goes far to show that man, tens of thousands of years ago, had advanced far in civilisation. And to come to modern times, look at Japan. Is it Christian? A Roman Catholic farmer solemnly assured the writer that he had read in a certain newspaper that

Japan had long since been converted to Roman Catholicism, and therefore she had beaten the Chinese. And that man was firmly convinced of the truth of the Japanese conversion. But Christianity has nothing to do with Japanese civilisation. Heathen Japan has been and is, and heathen it is likely to remain. Was Greece or Rome civilised? Don't talk of their vices. They knew no better. But Christianity is the vaunted enlightener of the world, and England especially. And what are we to say of such social blots as Ffrench, Somerset, Bolton and Parke, Wilde and others? Then look at the Liberator frauds, with the psalm-singing Jabez Balfour at its head. All these, and thousands of others, only point to the dreadful nature of the disease which must be raging within the body social of the United Kingdom. And all this after sixteen centuries of ecclesiastical teaching of the boasted message of God to man.

Some four thousand years before the present era, thus wrote Ptahhotpu, said to have been the son of Assa, king of Egypt:—

‘For if thou conductest thyself like them (the gods), discontent shall disappear from among men. . . . Instruct me in the language of old times, for it will work a wonder for the children of nobles; whosoever enters and understands it, his heart weighs carefully what it says, and it does not produce satiety.’

Speaking on this, Maspero thus writes:—

‘We must not expect to find in this work any great profundity of thought. Clear analysis, subtle discussions, metaphysical abstractions were not in fashion in the time of Ptahhotpu. Actual facts were preferred to fancies; man himself was the subject of observation, his passions, his habits, his temptations and his defects, not for the

purpose of constructing a system therefrom, but in the hope of reforming the imperfections of his nature, and of pointing out to him the road to fortune.'

So here we have a manuscript, written six thousand years ago, inculcating lessons to mankind, with the view of improving the imperfections of his nature. This certainly shows that civilisation had advanced to a high state. But this same Ptahhotpu also writes, in the same manuscript, a precept more in consonance with our modern theory, though far excelling our modern practice in our duty to our neighbour:—

'And if thou hast become great after thou hast been lowly, and if thou hast amassed riches after poverty, so that thou hast become, because of this, the first in thy city; and if the people know thee on account of thy wealth, and thou art become a mighty lord, let not thy heart be lifted up because of thy riches, for the author of them is God. Despise not thy neighbour, who is as thou wast, but treat him as thy equal.'

Has Christianity ever given a better lesson during the sixteen hundred years it has had the control of European education? Has it given man a better precept of his duty to his neighbour? And yet this text was written six thousand years ago, when, according to modern theologians, civilisation was not only unknown, but the earth itself was without form and void.

But let us see how far Christianity has helped in the advancement of the world. For sixteen hundred years it claims to have held the sway over Europe. The Roman Empire fell during its progress; and what was Europe given instead? A power which caused more misery to mankind than any government known in Europe. This power, known as the Papacy, was at the

zenith of its dominion about the time known in history as the Middle Ages. And what was the advancement it gave to Europe? So great was the benefit and advancement it conferred on mankind, that its zenith of glory is now known, as the Dark Ages. What satire, sarcasm and contempt is contained in that sentence—‘the Dark Ages.’

But Protestants will at once say, ‘Oh, what about the pure gospel of the Reformation.’ Well, let us see how far the Reformation helped mankind. No doubt it did one good thing; it taught men to think. But though it did, its followers of to-day are just as eager to suppress thought as was the Papacy in the sixteenth century. Strange inconsistency! But letting that pass, what advancement has the Reformation since then given to mankind? Did it teach men architecture, engineering, chemistry, medicine, or any of the various branches of science? The Egyptians taught architecture on so grand a scale that our greatest efforts appear but pigmy in comparison with their architectural remnants. According to Maspero, the Egyptians of six thousand years ago had ‘scientific treatises on medicine, geometry, mathematics and astronomy, manuals of practical morals; and lastly, romances, or those marvellous stories which preceded the romance among Oriental peoples. All these, if we had them, would form “a library much more precious than that of Alexandria.” No, certainly Christianity was not the author of any of the sciences. Nay, on the contrary, she invariably thwarted the man who dared to strike out a new path. Stevenson was nearly put up as a lunatic for daring to assert a locomotive could travel at the rate of thirty-six miles an hour. And now a days the clergy presented an attempt being made to obtain

rain by explosives attached to balloons, and the ordinary laity acquiesced in their complaint, that it was 'flying in the face of Providence.' Printing and gunpowder were known in China centuries before Christianity had attained to power. But some one may point to the missionary work of Christianity. Again the answer is against Christianity, for, according to its own teachings, so far from doing good it has done absolute harm. A strong assertion; but wait till you hear the explanation. Christianity teaches that the heathen are not damned since not having heard of Christ they cannot reject him; but when once he has been preached to a man then that man is enlightened, and if he rejects so great a salvation eternal damnation is that man's lot. Now, would it not be far better to let the heathen die in ignorance of Christ? For thus they would escape the risk of such dire punishment as eternal punishment. Especially is this the case when one considers the enormous number of men in Europe who are certain of eternal damnation, and about whose souls the clergy don't trouble themselves. We hear a great pother about missionary efforts; but let a man leave his church and become an Agnostic, does the clergyman of that church follow that lost soul and seek till he finds it? Certainly not. That clergyman knows too well he could not argue with that man. His clap-trap phrases and sentimental stringing together of sentences from the Bible won't avail when he comes to close quarters with an Agnostic like Huxley and others.

In many cases the clergyman has not the remotest idea when the New Testament was written. He has read Paley's *Evidences* for an examination, and never looked into the references mentioned by that ecclesiastical writer. And if he had he would have found the most

misleading statements in the book. And further, that all the Christian authorities there cited as of the first century never wrote one line of the works alleged to be theirs. But why go so far afield for converts when there are so many wandering sheep in England? Just take the police reports, and surely all those people who are brought up daily for drunkenness, husband and wife beating (we omit the murderers, for they always repent on the gallows and so go to heaven), and the other criminal acts too numerous to mention, are not so far advanced in saint life as to require no spiritual aid. It is true the clergy have admitted they cannot reach these people, and so have handed them over to the Salvation Army. But how do the medical doctors reach these people? In the face of all this it does seem incongruous to hear clergymen importuning for money to send missionaries to foreign lands, with far more work at home than they and the Salvation Army combined can cope with. So it would be much better for them to take the beam out of their own people's eyes before they go round the United Kingdom beseeching the means of procuring a rushlight wherewith to search out the imaginary mote they say exists in the heathen's eye. And according to their own teaching they only succeed in converting this mote in a great number of instances into a beam which will hereafter only intensify the fire of hell for some at least of those poor heathen.

But you ask—What will you give us in place of Christianity?

I answer, in the fullest confidence in the beneficial result to mankind, 'The Truth.' Let men act truly in their dealings with one another, and see what a different place this world would be. 'Utopian,' I think I hear.

Not more Utopian than trying to make men believe in the efficacy of a few words said over a piece of bread and a little wine to save their souls from a hell of brimstone and fire, and of which said hell no one knows the locality, and a large and rapidly-increasing number doubt the existence.

But how, you will ask, would men act if you take away the fear of punishment after death? Many persons, in all seriousness, have told the writer that if they thought there was no punishment after death, they would lead a very bad life. That is, they act in the most selfish, possible manner. Now, let us work this theory out to its entire extent.

We say nothing of the gross slur thrown on Christianity by these adherents of its teaching, in only acting out of fear, which is the worship of the Devil; and discarding love, which ought to be the worship of their God.

Well, a man leads a selfish life. But what happens? The first man he injures, of course, treats him likewise, and so, in a short time, that man has created an army of enemies, and alienated any friends he may have had. In a very short time this begins to tell on that man, and he is simply driven into Coventry. Well, now take the reverse side of selfishness. Suppose a man says I know I am in this world only for a short period, and therefore I will try and be as happy as I can. But how am I to attain that object? Evidently by making as many friends as possible, and giving annoyance to no man. Now, suppose every man acts on this principle; that is, tries to make his environments, or, in other words, his neighbours, happy; and if every one of his neighbours be actuated by the same motive, it follows, as a matter

of course, that that community will not require much attention from the police or the law. Each member will do as he would expect and wish his neighbour would do to him. In other words, his actions will be guided by truth, and not merely appearances, whereby men at present try to deceive their neighbours. Now, deceit is a lie, and if we analyse matters commercial in the crucible of truth, methinks the preponderance of the dross of deceit will be something amazing, but this is the result of sixteen hundred years of Christianity's teaching. Give the selfish doctrine here hinted at as long a trial and perhaps truth may abound a little more in matters mundane, for it certainly could scarcely be less apparent than at present.

CHAPTER III

THE first question which presents itself then is—What writers of the pagan world lived in or about the years 1 to 70 of the present era? When we say writers in or about the years 1 to 70, we mean all those who either knew of their own knowledge, or had means of acquiring information from public documents, or otherwise, of the events which took place during those years.

Our first witness is—

VALERIUS, MAXIMUS.—This writer lived at the time of the Emperor Tiberius. He wrote a considerable amount of valuable contributions to the then current literature. One of his works was entitled *Memorable Sayings and Doings*. He seems to have been attached to the Court of Tiberius, if we judge by the high encomium he paid to that Emperor. This work of his dealing with memorable sayings and doings, treats of religions and matters connected therewith. But he is absolutely silent about the Christian religion, and although he wrote a work about miracles, he does not mention any of those stupendous interferences with Nature with which the Gospel narratives abound. But, stranger still, he is silent about the author of those Christian miracles,—the remarkable resurrection of the

dead, and of their appearing in Jerusalem to many, at the crucifixion, the darkness, and the earthquake, all are treated to complete silence. This is the more extraordinary when it is considered he has related matters dealing with other and various religions, so that we may fairly conclude he was not more prejudiced against the Christian than any other religion.

SENECA, MARCUS ANNÆUS.—All scholars admit that this writer was a real historical man. He was a famous writer during the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, but we search in vain through his works for any mention of Jesus or his Apostles, and as to the wonders and miracles of Christianity, they are recorded by utter silence in the writings of this witness.

SENECA, LUCIUS, ANNÆUS.—He was the son of the former witness. He died in the year 65 by suicide at the command of Nero. He also, like his father, was a famous writer. Now, it is an interesting query—Do the works of this witness contain any mention of either Peter or Paul? It must not be forgotten that it was at this very time these two Apostles are said to have suffered martyrdom. Now, according to the Acts of the Apostles, Paul spent two entire years working with his hands in Rome. And Tertullian states that it was in the year 65 Peter and Paul were put to death in Rome. So if these Christian writings are to be relied on, Seneca the younger must have been living at least two years in Rome while Paul was there.

The theory of theologians is, that Paul was a well-known personage in Rome. And so strong a hold had this theory on the mind theological, that during the

fifteenth century letters were published purporting to be a correspondence which passed between Paul and this witness. And though for centuries these letters were regarded as perfectly genuine, they, like the large majority of the Christian evidences, as we shall see later on, turned out to be the pious fraud of an over-zealous Christian. And it is painful to see how theologians of to-day are trying to let these frauds pass into the region of oblivion. A late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge (George Long), thus writes in the dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography:—‘Seneca, like other educated Romans, rejected the superstition of his country; he looked upon the ceremonials of religion as a matter of custom and fashion, and nothing more. His religion is simple Deism; the Deity acts in man and in all things, which is the same thing that Paul said when he addressed the Athenians, “For in him (God) we live and move and have our being.” Indeed, there have been persons who, with the help of an active imagination, have made Seneca a Christian, and to have been acquainted with Paul, which is a possible thing but cannot be proved. The resemblance between many passages in Seneca and passages in the New Testament is merely an accidental circumstance. Similar resemblances occur in the meditations of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus. The fourteen letters of Seneca to Paul, which are printed in the old editions of Seneca, are apocryphal.’ And this is all he says about the gross dishonesty of Christians.

PHÆDRUS.—This witness lived about the middle of the first century. He is the author of five books of fables. These works are valuable for their purity, elegance and simplicity of style. The subject of them is partly

borrowed from Æsop. In part they are stories and history pieces of his own composition. He is supposed to have been a slave manumitted by Augustus. So here we have a writer, we may presume, who had seen the high as well as the low side of life. And when such a man puts his thoughts into writing, we may reasonably assume that those writings will contain some allusion, however slight, to the most remarkable occurrences that ever took place in the world. We all know how very fond modern Christians are of finding out all they can about the antecedents of their neighbours. Well, it may be taken for granted that the Romans of the first century were not much behind the present age in their taste for gossip. And here we have a writer who had mixed with the slave community; and even though some Roman slaves were of a much higher class than our domestic servants, still it is highly probable Phædrus had many opportunities of hearing the gossip of the servants. After his manumission he probably mixed with a higher class in the social world of Rome. And yet, with all the knowledge such an experience must have given him, he is completely silent, as well about Christianity as about the Apostles Paul and Peter. What greater foundation could he have had for his stories than the tales of the marvellous claimed by Christianity? But no; silence reigns over all.

ARETÆUS.—This witness was a physician who flourished about the time of Vespasian. He wrote several works celebrated for their accuracy of description of, as well as judicious practice in, curing diseases. His works are extensively quoted. Now can we, for one moment, imagine that such a searcher after cures for human ills would have passed over in silence the healing of the

blind, the maim, the deaf and the dumb, to say nothing of the raising of the dead? And when we compare this silence with the positive assertion of the Christian witness Quadratus, that in his day some of the persons raised from the dead in the years 30 to 33 were still living, the stretch on our credulity becomes a little too great.

PETRONIUS, ARBITER.—A satirical writer who committed suicide in 66 to avoid a worse death at the hands of Nero. He was governor of Bithynia, and afterwards consul. This writer is mentioned by Tacitus, the Roman historian, as being the most accomplished voluptuary at the court of Nero. And though this writer has left works both in verse and prose, he does not in the slightest manner refer to Christianity or its alleged marvels. Surely for a pagan satirist the Christian miracles offered a grand scope for the pen. But here, silence is the only corroboration to be found for the alleged existence of the founder of the Christian religion.

PHILO.—A learned Jewish writer. He was born shortly before the beginning of the present era. He died about the year 45 of this era. It is said he died too soon to have known St Paul or any of the Apostles, inasmuch as he lived in Egypt. But, on the other hand, it is also asserted he was a convert to Christianity. It is even said he met St Peter in Rome, but that he afterwards, having met with some cause of offence, from motives of resentment renounced the Christian creed. It is remarkable that he wrote about an intermediate being, whom he called the Logos, between God and the world. He represented 'God as the source of light, the Logos as the nearest circle of light proceeding from it.'

He certainly did not copy from St John's writing, since he was dead when those writings were penned. He also gives the Logos the title of Son of God, Paraclete, and Mediator between God and man. That Philo was a man who could exercise a considerable influence, and had means of access to public records, and of acquiring information, both by travelling himself, as well as sending messengers, is easily understood from the following passage out of the *Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah* :—

'Another presumably Roman office, though for obvious reasons often filled with Jews, was that of the Alabarch, or rather Arabarch, who probably collected the revenue derived from the Arab population. Among others, Alexander, brother of Philo, held that post. The firm of Alexander was probably as rich as the great Jewish banking and shipping house of Samaralla, in Antioch. Its chief was entrusted with the management of the affairs of Antonia, the much respected sister-in-law of the Emperor Tiberius. It was a small thing for such a man to lend King Agrippa, when his fortunes were very low, a sum of about seven thousand pounds with which to resort to Italy. Two of the sons of Alexander married daughters of King Agrippa, while a third, at the price of apostacy, rose successively to the post of Procurator of Palestine, and finally of Governor of Egypt. The Temple of Jerusalem bore evidence of the wealth and munificence of this Jewish millionaire. The gold and silver with which the nine massive gates were covered, which led into the temple, were the gift of the great Alexandrian banker.' And yet, though he must have been in Jerusalem, and wrote a considerable amount about the Essenes and Therapeutæ, he is completely silent concerning Jesus, his works, or his Apostles. It is strange that a man of

Philo's vast learning should not have heard of Jesus or his Apostles, nor anything of the darkness which Dionysius stated he observed at Heliopolis. Here we have a man whose brother was high in favour with Claudius, and managed the affairs of Antonia, sister-in-law of Tiberius, travelling to Rome; and although alleged to have had interviews with St Peter, is utterly ignorant of anything concerning either Christ or his Apostles. What about the report of Pontius Pilate to Tiberius, detailing *all* the events of the trial, execution and resurrection of Jesus Christ? That such a report was sent we have on the evidence of Tertullian. It seems tolerably clear that Philo was a man who mixed freely in society, and was anxious to gain information. From the way in which the flight into Egypt is told in the Gospel narratives, it would appear that communication between that country and Palestine was an ordinary, everyday occurrence. And is it probable that Philo could have remained in ignorance of what was going on in Jerusalem during the years 30 to 33, especially as he met in Rome a deputation of Palestinian Jews, who also like him came to lay their grievances before the Emperor? Philo, with two others, represented the Alexandrian Jews. And he has written a treatise on Essenes and Therapeutæ of Palestine. This clearly shows he had studied the question of their sect in Palestine, and notwithstanding all his knowledge, he is completely silent about Jesus, his works and Apostles.

JOSEPHUS.—This famous Jewish historian was born at Jerusalem in the year 37 of this era. At the age of fourteen he was so advanced in learning that he was consulted in the temple on difficult points of law. At sixteen

years of age he spent three years of his life in the desert with a member of the Essenes. At twenty-six he journeyed to Rome to obtain the liberation of some Jewish priests, sent there by Felix on some minor charge. He was shipwrecked in the Adriatic, rescued by a Cyrenian vessel and landed at Puteoli. He there became acquainted with some persons who obtained him an introduction to Nero's wife, who liberated the priests. There is here an apparent mingling of, not to say a striking similarity in, the events from the lives of Jesus and Paul. The famous passage quoted by Paley, and so long relied on as strong evidence in support of the then existence of Christianity, is now admitted to be an interpolation, so that this writer is also silent about the wonders which occurred only eighteen years before he was consulted on difficult points of law in the Temple at Jerusalem. Can we seriously believe that if the wondrous events related in the Gospels really occurred, that no more would be mentioned of Jesus, his works and disciples than the paltry allusions in the *Antiquities*, even supposing them genuine? When one considers the reason given for Herod's putting John the Baptist to death, it becomes hard to believe that Jesus was permitted to take some four thousand to five thousand people for several days away into the country. According to the Gospels, the multitudes that followed Jesus were much larger than those that went to hear John the Baptist. And yet, according to Josephus, Herod put the latter to death fearing a rebellion, owing to the crowds which followed him, while not one word is said about any such fear in the case of Jesus. It is instructive to read the comments on Josephus by theologians about his treatment of Old Testament

subjects, and also to observe the great faith these same theologians place in the passage about Jesus. In the one case we find such phrases as, 'impossible to reconcile,' 'contrasts most painfully,' 'almost inexplicable,' 'contradicts his own statements,' 'reasons sound rationalistic,' and so forth. In the other case the greatest straining of words, appealing to the consensus of the fathers, that a 'movement so far-reaching could scarcely be ignored in a historical work like that of Josephus,' the aptness of the place in which it (the passage about Christ) is inserted, 'the Josephine style and diction of the passage,' and so forth. Such language and argument savours more of the partisan and special pleader than the honest, unbiased critic. Some theologians are so far fair-minded as to admit the passage is partly original, and partly interpolated. One writer (Rev. A. Edersheim, D.D., Ph.D., Vicar of Loders, Bridport) thus expresses himself:—'But although thus far our inquiries have led us to expect some statement about Christ in the writings of Josephus, it seems impossible to peruse the language of the passage in question without feeling that in some parts, which will readily occur to the reader, it is that of a Christian, and not of a Jew like Josephus. We seem, therefore, shut up to the conclusion that, like not a few other passages in ancient documents, the expressions attributed to Josephus must have been altered and in some parts interpolated by later writers. While, therefore, we regard it as an authentic, although altered and interpolated testimony to Christ, it is a question how far it should be used by historical writers for apologetic purposes.'

Just fancy a lawyer pleading before a jury that the document on which he wanted to convict a man was partly genuine and partly forged. And when pressed to

show what was true and what false, stating he regarded it as genuine, but a question arose, owing to the alterations, how it could be used in evidence. Would not that pleader be laughed at? Yet this is the theological method. Theologians convince themselves that the story of the Gospels is true, and then twist and turn authentic and false documents to bolster up their convictions, and ask us to accept such ramblings as legal proof.

PLINY, the Elder, was born in the year 23 of the present era. He was a most copious writer. His natural history, containing thirty-six books, alone remains. But it contains articles on astronomy, geology, meteorology, fine arts, inventions and prodigies and wonders of nature. But as to throwing any light on the subject of the early history of Christianity, his works are a perfect blank. If that supernatural darkness really took place, as some Christian witnesses assert, why would not Pliny have mentioned it? He was far too much a man of the world to care whether he corroborated the Christian or any other religion; for, like all the better-class Romans of that day, all religions were the same to him. But as is the case with all pagan recorders of wonderful events, Pliny is absolutely silent on the Christian miracles.

PLINY, the Younger.—This renowned orator was born in the year 61. He was nephew of the elder Pliny. He wrote and published a great number of pieces; but nothing has escaped the wreck of time, except the books of letters and the panegyric upon Trajan. His works abound with anecdotes of the characters and incidents of the times. His letter to the Emperor is relied on by theologians as proof positive of the existence of the Christians at the end of the first or the beginning of the second century. However, it must be borne in mind that the Romans were in the habit

of calling the inhabitants of Palestine by the title of Christians or Chrestians. In any case, it is not of any great moment, for it is admitted by all that Christianity had a beginning, and whether that beginning took place in the year 100 of the present era does not affect the question of the existence of Jesus and His disciples. The letter does not mention anything about either them or the alleged miracles. And is it likely a man of the attainments of Pliny would have omitted all mention of men having been raised from the dead? Is it to be supposed that the Christians of that day would be one whit more backward in referring to those alleged living proofs of their Founder's miracles, than were Justin Martyr and others some seventy or eighty years later? But nothing of the kind is mentioned in this letter of Pliny, of which Paley makes so great a display.

SILIUS, ITALICUS.—This historian was born in the year 25. He wrote concerning the events of the second Punic war. He is completely silent about Christianity or its professors.

PERSIUS, AULUS PERSIUS FLACCUS.—This celebrated Roman poet was born in the year 34. That he was a man of an inquiring turn of mind becomes apparent when we consider that he collected a library of seven thousand volumes. And yet, with all this searching after knowledge, he is also silent about Jesus, His miracles, and His disciples. He died at the early age of twenty-eight.

MARTIAL, MARCUS VALERIUS, was a native of Bilbilis, in Spain. He went to Rome on attaining man's estate. He was gifted with fine literary talents, which ingratiated him with the principal literary characters then in Rome, and soon procured for him imperial patronage. His works are also remarkable for their silence about all matters relating to Christianity. He died in the year 104.

LUCAN.—This Roman poet was a nephew of Senecas. Nero forced him to commit suicide at the early age of twenty-seven. He mentions nothing about Christianity.

PROBUS, MARCUS VALERIUS.—Whether there were several authors of this name, or only one, is not quite certain, but a Probus flourished in the time of Nero. He was a celebrated grammarian. He dealt with matters of controversy. He is silent about the subject of our inquiry.

STATIUS, P. PAPINUS.—He was a distinguished grammarian, and opened a school at Naples in or about the year 39. None of his works are extant.

STATIUS, P. PAPINUS.—Son of the foregoing. He has left various works, of which some thirty-four poems are extant. Although he devotes some of his energies to exploits of Achilles, he does not seem to have considered Jesus, if he ever heard of Him, worthy of notice.

QUINTILIAN, M. FABIVS.—This celebrated Roman rhetorician was born about the year 40. Numerous as are his works, he does not bear the slightest testimony to the wondrous events recorded in the Gospel narratives.

PLUTARCH.—This Greek writer lived about the end of the first century. The work which has immortalised his name is his *Parallel Lives*. But though he has thought fit to pit, as it were, a Greek against a Roman, he does not think it even worth while to mention Jesus. Nor does he, as might be expected, pit Paul against Seneca. If Jesus and the Apostles were really historical characters, is it possible that such a man as Plutarch would have passed them over in silence in a work comparing these world-renowned men with one another?

SUETONIUS, C. TRANQUILLUS.—The writer of many works. He was born about the years 50 or 60. His *Lives of the Cæsars* is regarded as his greatest work.

The only passage from his works which Paley thought worthy of quotation is the following:—‘The Christians, a set of men of a new and mischievous (or magical) superstition, were punished.’ Now, whether this refers to the Jews generally, as is most probable, or to the Christians as at present understood, this sentence does not further us much in our inquiry, for, as has already been pointed out, the question is not that Christianity was founded, but were the alleged founders real historical characters? On this point Suetonius throws no light.

TACITUS.—This great Roman historian was contemporary with the younger Pliny. Paley relies on this writer to prove three things:—

Firstly. That the Founder of the institution was put to death.

Secondly. That in the same country in which He was put to death the religion, after a short check, broke out again and spread.

Thirdly. That it so spread as that, within thirty-four years from the author’s death, a very great number of Christians (*ingens eorum multitudo*) was found at Rome.

Now it is somewhat remarkable that so diffuse a writer as Tacitus should merely, in a casual manner, mention Christ as the Founder of a set of people who were held in abhorrence for their crimes. Is it likely he would have passed over in silence all the marvellous works said to have been performed by Jesus and His apostles? And not only pass them over in silence, but have described Jesus as the Founder of a pernicious superstition, whose followers ‘were criminals, and deserving the severest punishment.’ The manuscript of Tacitus’s writings was found by one Johannes Spires in Venice, in the year 1468.

Whether this Spire was one of those over-zealous devotees who consider it correct to do evil that good may ensue or not, cannot now be decided. But it is well-known that pious Christian frauds were not of a very uncommon nature in the 15th century, and where we find this particular Christian grace predominates so enormously throughout Christian works, we must not pin our faith to the absolute authenticity of this passage, which Paley ascribes to Tacitus.

Another point about this passage must not be lost sight of. The Romans called all the inhabitants of Palestine Christians or Chrestians, and it is well known that the name of Christ was more or less a common one in Palestine. Several insurgent chiefs were called by that name. However, though Paley seems to rely on this passage so much in his earlier chapters, he seems to feel it may be turned against him later on, for he says at page 271,—‘The name and character which Tacitus has given to Christianity, “*exitiabilis superstitio*”’ (a pernicious superstition), and by which two words he disposes of the whole question of the merits or demerits of the religion, afford a strong proof how little he knew, or concerned himself to know, about the matter.’ If Paley may use the passage to prove one thing, others may use it to prove the exact contrary, namely, that the Christians were deserving of the severest punishments. But Paley does not explain why this passage has never been mentioned by any one of the Christian Fathers. Now, if they had known of it they certainly would have alluded to it. Justin Martyr and others are alleged to have written apologies to the Roman emperors, and to have appealed to the Roman civic records for reports by Pilate. Why did they not refer to Tacitus? Perhaps since the passage did not then exist, they could

not have mentioned it. The passage is simply another pious Christian fraud, *i.e.*, a forgery.

TERENTIANUS, MAURUS.—This poet lived about the end of the first or beginning of the second century. Only one of his poems are extant. No mention is made of Christianity or its founder.

JUVENAL.—This writer is also silent about the founder of Christianity, nor does he mention the Christians. He died about 120.

EPICTETUS.—Although we have no works of this author extant, we still know from his follower, Arrian, that his object in life was to win the minds of his hearers to that which was good. If, therefore, he had heard of Jesus and his works, is it probable that Arrian would not have in some slight way alluded to so good a man had this witness mentioned him or his works?

ÆLIANUS, CLAUDIUS.—The writer of two considerable works, which have come down to us. In both of these works he seems anxious to inculcate moral and religious principles. He wrote one work especially on religious subjects; and though he deals with the epicureans and divine manifestations, he does not mention anything relating to Christianity. This is the more remarkable since he also wrote a collection of miscellaneous history. He flourished between the years 118 and 137.

ARRIAN.—This man was one of the best and most active writers of his time. He flourished from the year 100 till after 150. It is to him we are indebted for the works of Epictetus. At the end of his life he devoted himself to the composition of historical works. But, as with the other pagan writers, no mention is made of Christianity, its Founder or His works.

ARTEMIDORUS, DALDIANUS, was a native of Ephesus.

Wrote a book on the interpretation of dreams. In one of his books he gives a list of dreams he believes to have been realised ; but he says nothing about the dreams mentioned in the Gospels, nor does he mention Jesus or His works.

DIOSCORIDES, PEDACIUS OR PEDANIUS, the author of the celebrated treatise on *Materia Medica*. This is a work of great labour and research. It is strange that he is silent about those wonderful cures related in the Gospels.

DIONYSIUS, ÆLIUS, a Greek rhetorician of Halicarnassus. He lived about the time of Hadrian. He is also silent as to Christianity.

GAELEN.—This medical writer lived about the year 130 of the present era. He has left no records relating anything about Christianity.

CLAUDIUS, PTOLEMÆUS.—This writer lived about the year 189. He is the great astronomer of that age. Needless to say his works are silent about the darkness over the world at the Crucifixion, the Star in the East, or the earthquake.

FRONTO, MARCUS CORNELIUS.—The works of this writer were numerous, but the zeal of the Christians destroyed them. Some of his letters were discovered in 1814 in Milan. They were in a mutilated state, having been converted into what are called palimpsests. Some others were found at Rome in a similar state of imperfection. Now, if this writer had mentioned anything about Christianity or its alleged Founder, his works would no doubt have been preserved ; but the fact of their having been used for copying other documents upon by the monks of Bobbio, and other monasteries, may be taken as a proof that Fronto's writings were silent on the subject of our inquiry.

ANTONINUS, LIBERALIS.—This Greek grammarian is generally believed to have lived about the year 147. Though he relates tales which are classed among the mythical, he is silent about the subject of our inquiry.

FLACCUS, VERRIUS.—This Roman writer was an antiquary, an historian, a philologer, and perhaps a poet. He lived about the year 180. In the works of his that have come down to us no mention is made of the subject of our inquiry.

APPIAN was a native of Alexandria. He was a copious writer of Roman history. He devoted his attention to the events connected with each country which the Romans had subdued. One of his books is entitled *Syria and Parthia*. But yet he is, like the other pagan writers, silent about Christianity or its Founder. He lived about the year 150.

CLAUDIUS, DRUSUS NERO GERMANICUS.—This Emperor of Rome has left some historical works, but he is silent about Christianity or its alleged Author.

HEPHÆSTION.—This Greek grammarian lived during the middle of the second century. He makes frequent quotations from various writers, but is silent about Christianity or any of the writers mentioned in the New Testament.

GELLIUS, AULUS.—Probably the best way to introduce this writer to the reader's notice will be by quoting from Professor Ramsay's notice of him, in *Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography*:—'His well-known work entitled *Noctes Atticae*, because it was composed in a country house near Athens during the long nights of winter, is a sort of miscellany containing numerous extracts from Greek and Roman writers on a great variety of topics connected
h history, antiquities, philosophy and philology, inter-

spersed with original remarks, dissertations and discussions, the whole thrown into twenty books without any attempt at order or arrangement. We here find preserved a multitude of curious and interesting passages from authors whose works have perished, and a vast fund of information elucidating questions which must otherwise have remained obscure; but the style is deformed by that species of affectation which was pushed to extravagant excess by Apuleius—the frequent introduction of obsolete words and phrases derived for the most part from the ancient comic dramatists.’

From this extract it will be seen that this writer has made quotations from other writers, but it is strange nothing is said about Peter or Paul; nothing about Dionysius the Areopagite, whose conversion surely must have made a stir and commotion in that city of philosophers—Athens.

LUCIANUS, of Samosata on the Euphrates.—This most voluminous writer owes his reputation to works which principally consist of attacks upon the religions and philosophy of the age. Strange he passes over Christianity in silence.

AURELIUS, MARCUS.—All that is left of this Roman Emperor’s writings is a work in Greek upon moral and religious subjects. Christianity is not mentioned.

We shall not quote any more pagan authors. The list above given is sufficient to show the complete silence maintained by the pagan writers. Can it be believed that where such a great anxiety is apparent to ascertain and record matters dealing with the marvellous, that no reference would be made to Christianity or its Founder and propagators? It would be preposterous to say there was a general conspiracy of silence among the pagan writers during the first century and one half of the present era. Other religions have been mentioned, and why not Christianity with all its accompanying wonders?

CHAPTER IV

THE next class of evidence we have to consider is what may be called the positive testimony in support of the existence of Jesus and his disciples. But when this evidence is weighed and sifted, as a lawyer weighs and sifts evidence in an ordinary criminal trial, it is found to afford no proof which would be relied on to convict the most abandoned criminal that was ever placed in a dock. How then does a lawyer sift evidence? His first point is to ascertain as much information as possible about the character and history of each individual witness. And this information is not only sought about his own witnesses, but most particularly about the witnesses on the other side.

If it be found that a witness is an ignorant man, a man easily imposed upon, or what is generally known as a gullible man, that lawyer will naturally ask the jury to, at least, *hesitate before they place reliance on such a witness's story.* Again, if a witness be proved to have wilfully perjured himself, his entire evidence is nearly always discarded, save in so far as it may be borne out by more trustworthy witnesses, but even then very little, if indeed any, importance can be attached to it. Furthermore, no importance must be attached to any geographical or historical accuracy in a witness's evidence. This, on consideration, becomes at once apparent. For

instance, suppose a set of men determine to make up a story, they will naturally all give the same geographical location to the scene of the occurrence. Since if they each put the place and time of some particular event at different positions and periods of the earth, or described the surrounding country where the occurrence took place as different from what it was known to be at the time of which they were relating, the falsehood of their story would be self-evident. Or again, should they contradict the facts of history they would be at once convicted of dishonesty and falsehood. Then there is another view a lawyer will put before a jury as a test of a witness's story. That is, does the story, in relating events of a public nature, meet with any corroboration from the contemporaries of the witness living at or near the scene of those public events.

Let us then examine the evidence which has come down to us, or rather is stated to have come down to us, from the first one hundred and fifty years of the present era. We find that this period of the earth's history was one peculiarly superstitious, and this superstition is found to abound freely amongst the so-called apostolical fathers. That ignorance was more prevalent during this early period than at our time goes without saying.

And yet, notwithstanding our knowledge, what superstition is not to be found to-day even among well-educated and well-to-do people? Some persons there are who cannot shake off fears arising from early associations, and how much our belief in the supernatural is based on those early associations we need not now dwell on. Shall we then not expect a greater amount of this belief in the supernatural, and a consequently more luxurious growth of superstition, during

the first two centuries of the present era? That this is the case will be quite evident to anyone who will so far overcome the prevalent superstition of the age—fear that their faith may be shaken—and investigate matters historical for the period we are considering. As to the identity of some of the apostolical fathers with real historical characters, the evidence is, to say the least, most unsatisfactory. Even that great writer on, and believer in, the truth of the existence of these early writers, Canon Westcott, has to admit there is ‘a mythic dignity’ about Clement of Rome. We find a halo of myth surrounding the most of, if not all, these apostolical fathers, and, therefore, the first requirement with regard to a witness, namely, his character and antecedents, are wanting in some, at all events, of the witnesses for the truth of the events of Christianity. Bear in mind the question is not how Christianity was founded, but are the events upon which it is stated to have been founded real historical facts, and, also, are the alleged witnesses historical characters? All the religions of the world were founded, but that does not prove that, therefore, those religions are true. If a religion be true, the more its foundation be examined the more will its truth stand out, and the stronger will be the hold that religion will take on the human mind.

The first witness, of what may be called the positive side, we will call, is—

CLEMENT, of Rome.—About this apostolical father’s history nothing is known. We say nothing, because it is only from the alleged writings of men stated to have lived centuries after him that anything about him has been ascertained. Of contemporary evidence there is none. The advocates in his favour ask us to take the

notices of him in writings, penned long years after his supposed existence, as being perfectly reliable. It is right to point out here that no extract from the New Testament can be admitted in an inquiry such as the one upon which we are engaged, for the earliest New Testament manuscript is admitted, by its most ardent advocates, to have been written centuries after the period with which we are dealing, and, therefore, it is of no possible value as a proof that any person mentioned in it existed some three or four hundred years before that manuscript was written. Paley, who wrote one hundred years ago, states in his *Evidences of Christianity* :—

‘We are in possession of an epistle written by Clement, Bishop of Rome, whom ancient writers, without any doubt or scruple, assert to have been the Clement whom St Paul mentions.’

Now, in this sentence, short as it is, there are three most positive assertions.

Firstly, that there was a Bishop of Rome called Clement in the first century.

Secondly, that he wrote an epistle.

Thirdly, that there are ancient writers whose evidence is undoubted.

As we proceed with this inquiry it will be seen that these propositions of Paley’s are, to put it mildly, most misleading, and it is to be observed that Paley studiously avoids saying one word derogatory of this witness. Not the slightest allusion is made to Clement’s superstition. To the ordinary reader of Paley, the last thing which would occur would be that this alleged Bishop of Rome was a mass of superstition. But that the writer of the Epistle to the Corinthians from Rome was a very superstitious individual will be apparent from a perusal of the

following extract. In it the writer tries to prove the probability of the resurrection from the fable (which he calls a strange miracle) of the Phoenix.

‘Let us consider a strange miracle which takes place in the regions of the east, that is, Arabia. For there is a bird called the Phoenix. This being the only begotten of its parents, lives five hundred years, and when it arrives at its dissolution by death, it makes for itself a coffin out of frankincense and myrrh, and the rest aromatics, into which, when its time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. From its flesh, when rotten, a worm is born, which is nourished from the moisture of the dead animal and generates wings. Afterwards, when it becomes strong, it takes up that coffin where the bones of predecessors are, and carrying these, completes the journey from the country of Arabia to Egypt into the city called Heliopolis (city of the sun), and in the day-time, in the sight of all men, flying over the altar of the sun, it places them there, and so departs back again. Do you think, then, it is a great and marvellous thing if the Creator of all things shall bring about the resurrection of those who have served him righteously in the confidence of a good faith, when he shows to us even by a bird the greatness of his promise.’ Again, Paley’s statement about the assertions of ancient writers is not borne out by facts. None of these alleged ancient writers’ works are extant. Furthermore, the assumption of Paley, implied, no doubt, in the words, ‘whom ancient writers, without doubt or scruple, assert to have been the Clement whom St Paul mentions,’ that these ancient writers were men whose judgment was so well founded as to be taken as authoritative, must not be passed over. The ordinary reader would very naturally conclude that

those writers were men who knew far more of the times of the first century than modern scholars possibly could. But Paley is silent as to when those ancient writers asserted 'without any doubt or scruple.' Eusebius really is the historian to make the assertion that Clement of Rome is the Clement mentioned by Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians. Now, from the time of the alleged Clement of Rome to the date of Eusebius's writings, more than two hundred and fifty years had elapsed. As well might we appeal to Gibbon's or Hume's history as a proof of the existent facts stated therein to have occurred in the fourteenth century, as Paley appeal to quotations from writers who lived some centuries after Clement as a proof that he was a real historical character some two hundred and fifty years before those writers. What is wanted is *some contemporary* evidence, but of this there is absolutely none.

Another orthodox writer (Rev. Dr Salmon) states four reasons why this apostolical father is a genuine person. If he were a real personage, why all this labour?

Firstly. 'Because among the most authentic proofs of the connection of Clement with the Roman Church may be placed the mention of his name in its liturgy.'

Therefore, on this principle, the Egyptian mythology ceases to be mythology and becomes genuine history, because it is mentioned in Egyptian liturgy.

Secondly. 'An independent proof that Clement held high position in the Church of Rome is afforded by the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the writer of which claims to have been contemporary with Clement.'

If all the proofs in support of the supernatural be no stronger than the proposition here set forth, there would not be much difficulty in upsetting the theory.

Supposing a man named Hermas to have lived at the time of the mythical Clement, the mere assertion by him that he was a contemporary of Clement does not *per se* form an independent proof that Clement held high office in the Church of Rome. But what shall be said when this very Hermas has to fight, so to speak, for his own existence? It is more probable that Hermas, like Clement, was a mythical being than the contrary.

What the effect of the writings of this Hermas would be on a modern jury, in the way of convincing them of his sanity, it is hard to say. His visions and dreams are most absurd, and deal more with human love than anything else. By most writers his works are regarded, even if genuine, as insignificant. The greater number of scholars assert these writings to be of a later date, and therefore spurious.

Thirdly. Dr Salmon states: 'Next in antiquity among the notices of Clement is the general ascription to him of the Epistle to the Church of Corinth, commonly known as Clement's First Epistle.'

Now, the author to whom we are indebted for this knowledge is Eusebius, and as he wrote some two hundred and fifty years after Clement, and bears a character as an historian for anything but accuracy, we must take this proof with a considerable amount of hesitation.

Fourthly. Dr Salmon relies on the statements of Irenaeus. But the information concerning this Bishop of Lyons is nearly all depending on Eusebius, so we have again to accept *post factum* evidence, which is utterly valueless in our present inquiry. It may be instructive to quote a passage from Dr Salmon's *Infallibility of the Church*:—

'In fact, I consider that it was the circulation of the

tale of Peter's Roman Episcopate which stimulated the invention of Syrian Christians to make out an equal honour for their capital.' Here we have this advocate of Clement throwing doubts on the Roman Episcopate of Peter by showing that the Syrian Christians claimed the same apostle as their bishop. And he admits the inventive faculty of the early Christians, and yet it is on hearsay evidence he wants to prove the existence of the mythical Clement of Rome.

Who Clement's parents were we know not. Where he was born, or when, are subjects about which we are equally ignorant. We are, therefore, in the case of this witness, in a very unsatisfactory position. As to his history or character we know absolutely nothing. We cannot examine even into the general belief or train of thought of his neighbours, for we know not who they were. The only record, if such it can be called, of his we have is a document, the genuineness of which some scholars dispute; and even theologians themselves only contend that if it was not written by him it was penned under his supervision. But those who maintain it to be a spurious document are supported in their view by the fact that a second document, also ascribed to him, and for many centuries believed to have been genuine, has been given over to the large and rapidly-increasing crowd of spurious writings. And not only has this second epistle been falsely ascribed to him, but two other works as well. His appeal to the silly fable about the Phoenix to prove the resurrection shows very forcibly the tremendous depth and argumentative force of the man's mind. With such a powerful lever as the Phoenix, why say a word about such a trifle as there being then on earth men who had been raised from the dead? It was,

no doubt, not worth while mentioning the raising of Jairus's daughter, the widow's son, Lazarus, or some of those who 'arose and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.' Still we are stupid enough to think that the force of such an appeal would have been overwhelming, since, if any credence is to be placed upon the statements of a later witness, some of those raised from the dead by Jesus had reached to his time, *i.e.*, about seventy years after the ascension. And surely no stronger evidence could be adduced than the production of persons raised from the dead. But what are we to say of the statement in this supposed genuine epistle, in which Clement calls the Church of Corinth an ancient church? According to Alford, St Paul founded the Church of Corinth in the year 54. This epistle theologians claim to have been written in the year 70. So here we have a church only sixteen years established described as ancient. And when we look a little deeper into this epistle we find that a regular Church system was in full working order, for the entire scope of this first epistle to the Corinthians is simply to make the Church of Corinth obey the clergy. Just fancy what this means; a regular set of clergy in Corinth taking their orders from Rome, and the congregation having so far set those clergy at defiance as to call for a special epistle from the Bishop of Rome to bring them to a sense of their duty. Really, to a lay mind, this savours more of the sixth century than of the times of persecutions. The writer of this epistle, whoever he may be, quotes what he alleges to be words of Jesus, and mentions Peter and Paul, and refers especially to the epistle of the latter. There was, as above mentioned, a second epistle ascribed to this

apostolical father. For years it was regarded as genuine, but now it is admitted to be a work of far later date. This, then, is our first forged evidence on the positive side for the supernatural, so here we have our difficulties increased by finding false—nay, wilfully false—testimony so early in our inquiry. But, unfortunately, this is not the only forgery connected with this man's name, for we find *Apostolical Canons, Constitutions*, and the *Recognitions of Clement and Clementina*, along with the foregoing, forming the batch of forgeries ascribed to the mythical Clement of Rome. And surely we are not exceeding our duties as jurymen in adding the first epistle of this mythical witness to the rubbish heap of forgeries? We are quite justified in doing so, according to the following quotation from the *Apostolical Records of Early Christianity*. This work was written by the late Rev. John Allen Giles, Rector of Sutton, Surrey.

Before we draw any inference from these conflicting statements, it is desirable to know whether earlier writers than Eusebius have borne such testimony as may prove that the epistle of Clement, which we now have, is the work of him who was the companion and disciple of St Paul; and here we have similar difficulties to contend with, for the first writers who seem to assert the identity of the two are Irenæus and Origen, at the beginning of the third century. The testimony of the latter is somewhat vague, and that of the former comes to us through the *Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius*, who wrote at the beginning of the fourth century. The same historian also quotes Dionysius of Corinth and Hegesippus as naming Clement and his epistle, but he quotes from these two writers to show that they identified him with

the Clement named in St Paul's epistles. Hegesippus and Dionysius wrote as late as the year 160 A.D., when most of those forgeries and false ascriptions of writings were already beginning to swarm throughout Christendom. The first-named writer, Irenæus, is said to have written, in Greek, a work against heresies, but nothing of it remains except fragments preserved by Epiphanius and Eusebius. . . . 'If, then, these are the only grounds upon which we claim the Epistle to the Corinthians to be the production of one who is named in the New Testament as a contemporary and companion of St Paul, such a claim indicates a facility of belief which is not generally shown in the case of any similar writing of which we have any knowledge.'

Thus, here we see a reverend gentleman admitting the insufficiency of the evidence of the earliest apostolical father.

BARNABAS.—This is the second witness on the positive side of the orthodox view. Of this so-called saint there is not a particle of contemporary information. His parentage, place of birth, and country are unknown. A modern writer (John Morell Mackenzie) states:—'To the few details in his life supplied by the New Testament, various additions have been made, none of which are certainly true, while many of them are evidently false.' One legend asserts he became a believer after witnessing the miracle of the curing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. It is not necessary to mention any other myths regarding this supposed saint's life. His body is stated to have been discovered in 478 by a monk of Cyprus. And, of course, we have the usual miraculous cures occurring in the region of the tomb. This place

was called the place of healing. Be it observed, these cures never took place till after the discovery and removal of the body. Were such legends and alleged wonders relied on to prove the existence of a heathen hero, the man who brought forward such evidence would be either looked upon as mad, or of weak intellect. But in matters theological we must accept all legends, or else we will have no evidence. However, let us look at the testimony stated to have been given by this witness. One epistle is stated to have been written by him. But the author does not put his name to this document. This epistle is attached to the oldest manuscript of the New Testament, called the codex Sinaiticus. Now this document, so far as the New Testament is concerned, is looked upon as being almost inspired. Which term, we take it, means at least authorised by God. But why the entire manuscript is not regarded as inspired, while a portion is, does not clearly appear. No doubt, when this epistle is read, it bears upon the face of it the stamp of utter folly and absurdities. As a proof of the existence of Jesus and his Apostles it is valueless. It never alludes to the miracles, Here is a specimen of the erudition and depth of thought of the author :—

‘Understand, therefore, children, these things more fully, that Abraham, who was the first that brought in circumcision, circumcised, having received the mystery of the three letters. For the Scripture says that Abraham circumcised three hundred and eighteen men of his house. But what, therefore, was the mystery that was made known unto him? Mark first the eighteen, and next the three hundred. For the numeral letters of ten and eighteen are JH, and these denote Jesus. And

because the cross is that by which we are to find grace, therefore he adds three hundred, the note of which is T. Wherefore, by two letters, he signified Jesus, and by the third, His cross. He who has put the engrafted gift of his doctrine within us, knows that I never taught anyone a more certain truth, but I trust that ye are worthy of it.'

Paley treats this epistle as perfectly genuine, and mentions it being quoted by Clement of Alexandria in the year 194, by Origen in 230, Eusebius in 325, and Jerome in 392. But he is careful not to tell us that Eusebius ranks it amongst the spurious books, and also speaks of it as uncanonical. However, whether it be a forgery or not, does not matter, for it gives no evidence as to the many wonders asserted to have taken place during the first forty years of the present era. The supposed quotations from the New Testament don't prove the existence of the supernatural events therein recorded. That the work bears the impress of having been tampered with is admitted, and therefore its value as evidence must be considerably discounted, even were it genuine. The writer evidently was a cabalist, from the expressions in his alleged work. According to Hefele the work is undoubtedly spurious.

HERMAS.—The next witness in support of the historical truth of the supernatural events of early Christianity is Hermas. Paley, as usual with him, takes the alleged writing of this witness as a genuine document. And this because it is mentioned by Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian (200) and Origen. It did not apparently occur to him that when the Christians of the first six or seven centuries were so industrious as to forge

entire books, it would not be a very difficult task for them to interpolate allusions to their forgeries in the writings of others. This may, perhaps, seem a far-fetched idea. But look at the mass of forgeries with which early Christian literature teems, and then try to imagine what would a juror say were he asked to take such evidence, or literature, as a proof of a man's guilt. Would not the judge tell him to discard such evidence? However, be this Hermas real or fictitious, his writings are simply a jumbling up of visions and dreams, love and prophecy. As to giving any evidence on the subject of the historical truth of the Gospel narratives, it is a perfect blank. 'The shepherd of Hermas, a weak and spiritless train of allegories and all that remained of their supposed author, soon followed the forged writings of the Areopagite. The shepherd was also declared to be a forgery, or, at all events, to have been written by another Hermas, who lived many years later, and not the contemporary of the Apostles. This fact is now no more disputed than in the case of Dionysius; no one ventures to say that the work of Hermas is genuine, unless, perhaps, some solitary and credulous critic rebuilds upon a blind faith, the faith which the free use of reason had demolished.' So writes the Rev. Dr Giles already referred to. Historical evidence for the existence of St Paul there is none, and why, therefore, the mere mention of Hermas, in writings alleged to have been Paul's, should give a genuine historical stamp to the alleged existence of Hermas, has not yet been shown. It is generally claimed that, because there existed an opinion among the Christians of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries that such men existed, therefore they did exist. Let us apply this reasoning to other matters

besides the existence of Jesus and his Apostles. For over two thousand years the general universal belief of mankind was that witchcraft was an established fact. And so confirmed was this belief that laws were passed to put down this dreadful satanic influence. But what is the belief now? Does any well-educated person believe in this theory at the present day? Is it not becoming more and more acknowledged that there is no such thing as witchcraft or sorcery? But, according to the consensus of opinion for over two thousand years, witchcraft was a reality. And, except for the mass of forgeries, is the evidence for the existence of Jesus and his Apostles one whit stronger?

It is scarcely necessary to dwell further on this witness's testimony, since it is now admitted by all, save the most bigoted, that the Hermas mentioned by Paul never wrote one line of the drivelling, strange and unmeaning language contained in the visions, commands and similitudes, which was read in the churches of the second century. If they were read, it does not say much for the churches. That these books were written in the middle of the second century would appear from the mention of them in the *Muratorian Fragment*. Provided always that the Fragment itself is of so early a date; for it must be remembered that it is only *supposed* to have been written in the second century. And this supposition is based on the statement in the Fragment that the writer was then living during the episcopate of Pius. By the Fragment these works of Hermas are stated to have been written by a brother of Pius, Bishop of Rome. We mention it here as having been at one time almost regarded as inspired. And, even at the present day, some theologians assert there is nothing in the teach-

ing of the book which would entitle us to reject it, knowing so little as we do of the progress of doctrine during the years 100 to 150.

DIONYSIUS, the Areopagite.—It may not be out of place to bring forward here this witness of a former period of Christianity. Theologians, as a general rule, don't care to refer to this witness. He is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. To him were ascribed two large folio volumes. After having been regarded as of almost equal veneration with the Scriptures for several centuries, these voluminous works were found to have been forgeries. Some critics maintain they were written in the fifth century. Paley does not allude to this false witness. But it is necessary, in an inquiry of the nature of the one on which we are engaged, that this evidence should be brought forward. These writings, it is said, were first unequivocally mentioned at Constantinople about the year 532, but were not generally known in the West till after 827. The writer, who assumes the rôle of Dionysius, states he witnessed the supernatural darkness at the crucifixion, when he was at Heliopolis (the modern Baalbeck). This is the only mention of the occurrence, outside the New Testament, in any document purporting to have been written by an eye-witness of the event. It is said that if the entire of these writings were lost, they could easily be replaced from the works of Thomas Aquinas, so copiously has he used them. This shows that up to the thirteenth century those works were held in great esteem, but now they are not referred to by any orthodox controversialist.

IGNATIUS.—The next witness on the orthodox side

is one who has caused considerable controversy amongst the supporters of truth of the supernatural in early Christianity—Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. Of his so-called original fifteen epistles, three are now only admitted by the orthodox to be genuine, and these three are concerned with admonitions to churches, but do not throw any historical light on the truth of the events on which Christianity claims to be founded. Paley treats his writings as perfectly genuine, and lays great stress on alleged quotations from the New Testament. We say alleged quotations, because, when dealing with works, nine-tenths of which are forgeries, it really becomes dangerous to rely on anything contained in them. As to this witness's parentage nothing is known; legends were rife that he was the infant Jesus took in his arms when rebuking the ambitious contemporaries of his disciples. But this is only a legend. Chrysostom, who lived about 400, states that Ignatius never saw Jesus. This is no doubt the truth, but for reasons very different from those thought of by Chrysostom. His place of birth is also unknown. Some rumours say he was a disciple of Peter, while others assert that he and Polycarp were disciples of John. Of his episcopate nothing is known. When we say nothing, we mean that there is no real *bonâ fide* record about it. Eusebius is the source of all the information about it. This apostolical father seems to have been swayed by the same motive as the other early fathers; namely, a great and most fervid desire to impress on the laity the importance and prerogatives of the clergy and especially of the bishops. It was for a long time believed he wrote fifteen epistles. But recent discoveries have proved this to have been erroneous. Then only seven were regarded as genuine, and even

these are now further cut down to three. In all probability, with a little more discovery and investigation, these three will join pristine brothers. But why weary over this miserable and sickening display of falsehood? These epistles are perfectly worthless in proof of the truth of the historical foundation of Christianity. If They count for anything, it would be as a proof of its falsehood. They are completely silent as to any of the events related in the Gospels. Allusions, no doubt, there are to Christ being born of a virgin, baptised by John, crucified under Pontius Pilate and Herod, and raising himself up. But these are merely the usual rhapsodical expressions to be met with in all ecclesiastical sermons. He does say that Jesus said to the disciples, after his resurrection, Take, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal demon. So that he proves Jesus believed in demons. He also says, in his epistle to the Philadelphians, that he heard of some who said, 'Unless I find it written in the originals I will not believe it to be written in the Gospel. And when he replied it was written, they answered, What lay before them in their corrupted copies?' Here we have an assertion that documents were already corrupted in the first century, and of their being referred to by disbelievers as a reason for wanting to see the originals, and which originals were apparently not forthcoming. But Ignatius is striving to make the Philadelphians obey the clergy, and not trying to prove Jesus was a real historical person. He takes it for granted, as theologians of to-day, that this requires no proof, notwithstanding the challenge of the disbelievers. He is alleged to have been Bishop of Antioch, in Syria, towards the latter end of the first and beginning of the second century. The authorities on whom this asser-

tion rest are Eusebius and Jerome. Of Eusebius mention has already been made, and since Jerome was born about 342 and died in 420, he cannot be regarded as a very reliable authority. At least, a person living some three hundred years after the happening of an event would not be considered a reliable person to prove such an event took place. Of course, as to Ignatius's parentage and place of birth, nothing is known. When a writer of the seventeenth century (Owen, Jno., 1681) writes of this alleged apostolical father's epistles, 'The truth is, the corruption and fiction of epistolical writings in the first ages was so intolerable as that very little in that kind is preserved sincere and unquestionable.' What shall be said now of these writings, with the further knowledge before us revealed by the discovery of the Syriac Version of these so-called genuine epistles? But let us see what evidence Ignatius gives in support of the supernatural events recorded in the New Testament. He states that 'the Ephesians are stones of the temple of the Father, prepared for His building and drawn up on high by the cross of Christ as by an engine, using the Holy Ghost as the rope.' He says Paul makes mention of the Ephesians throughout *all* his epistles. He mentions the Virgin Mary, and states that the death 'of our Lord' was kept secret from the prince of this world, and his proof that our Saviour was manifested is so cogent that we quote the text,—'A star shone in the heaven beyond all the stars, and its light was inexpressible, and its novelty struck terror into men's minds. All the rest of the stars, together with the sun and moon, were the chorus to this star. But that sent out its light exceeding above them all, and men began to be troubled to think

whence this new star came, so unlike to all the others. Hence all the powers of magic became dissolved, and every bond of wickedness was destroyed; men's ignorance was taken away, and the old kingdom was abolished.' Can this be called reliable evidence? The idea of the cross being used by the rope of the Holy Ghost to draw up the saints to heaven. It may be metaphor, but surely not evidence. Then the devil not knowing of Jesus's death. While, according to the New Testament, there was that little earthquake and the darkness and raising of the dead. Did the prince of this world not make any inquiries as to the cause of the disturbance in his kingdom? Especially as we are told, at that very time, he was engaged in the greatest battle of his three years' conflict with his Creator, the Triune Deity? But really, where there is such folly and ignorance displayed as exemplified in the statement of a star shining along with and brighter than the sun, moon and the rest of the stars, it is not necessary to consider this witness's rhapsodies any further. The very grave question must be asked, How could this witness have written all these epistles while bound to ten leopards, as he calls the Roman soldiers? And be it borne in mind these same soldiers were hurrying Ignatius to Rome, and only arrived there on the last day of the games on which, according to the Roman religion, Ignatius could have been cast to the wild beasts. Ignatius we believe to have been the creation of a Christian forger. Of his existence there is no proof, either from public records or other reliable documents.

POLYCARP. — About this witness there is nothing authentic. Supposition is largely, if not entirely, availed

of, as is usual in matters theological. Amongst the learned, disputes as to the authenticity of the alleged epistles of this supposed saint are very numerous. This fact alone throws a cloud of doubt over any trifling allusions to Christ contained in the only epistle alleged to be extant. But the fact that this epistle depends upon the genuineness of the Ignatian ones goes far to place it also in the category of spurious works. In any case, it gives no evidence of the facts, miracles and occurrences alleged in the New Testament to have taken place during the first thirty-three years of the present era. Beyond stringing together sentences found in the New Testament centuries after the alleged penning of this epistle, there is no evidence. It seems strange reference should be made in one place to Ignatius 'as having gone to the place that was due to them' (*i.e.*, Ignatius, Zozimas, Rufus, Paul, and the rest of the Apostles) 'from the Lord, with whom also they suffered.' While further on, in the same epistle, the request is made that 'when you know certainly of Ignatius and those that are with him, signify unto us.' Was Ignatius dead or alive when this epistle was written? According to Polycarp, he was both dead and alive. Such evidence may be very good with Sunday-school teachers, but it would not have much weight with a jury. As to the alleged martyrdom of Polycarp, it is palpably a pure invention of the writer of *Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History*. We cannot quote this story at length, but will merely mention 'that as the flames from the faggots ascended above the head of the martyr they were bellied out like the sail of a vessel, so that the saint was enveloped in them but not burned. And when the Roman centurion saw this he commanded a soldier to go in and

stab Polycarp. And this the soldier did with his sword' (as if walking through those flames were quite a simple, ordinary occurrence). 'And after the saint was stabbed his blood rushed out in such volumes as to put out the fire.' For a man of the patriarchal age of eighty-six years, Polycarp must have been a very full-blooded person. Here, then, is the last witness of the first century on the orthodox side in support of the supernatural. Can we call this evidence? The entire writings, even if genuine, would not prove anything. They merely assert the belief of the writers in a certain person, but adduce no evidence or appeal to any corroborative testimony. But when the entire writings are spurious, and written long, and, in some cases, several centuries, after the supposed death of the alleged witnesses; and further, the very existence of those witnesses themselves being a matter which requires to be proved, what credence can be placed on this alleged testimony?

For the reader's guidance we append a table of the various Christian writers alleged to have existed and left works behind them. We are assuming that these works were in use from the alleged date of their supposed composition. It must be borne in mind that a very large number of scholars do not admit any of these works to be genuine.

It will be seen that no pagan writer mentions any of these authors or their works.

List of Alleged Christian Witnesses after Jesus and the Apostles, during the First Century, alleged to have written the Works set after their Names.

Author's Name.	Alleged Works.	Admitted to be Forgeries.	New Testament Characters, except Jesus, mentioned in Work.	Works now accepted as Genuine by all Scholars.	Approximate Number of Years Forged Works were believed Genuine.	Pagan Authors who make mention of these Writers or their Works.
Clement of Rome,	1st Epistle to the Corinthians.	...	Peter and Paul.	None.	1600	None.
	2nd Epistle to the Corinthians.	Forged.	...	None.	...	...
	Apostolical Canons.	Forged.	...	...	...	...
	Recognitions.	Forged.	...	...	...	...
Barnabas,	1 General Epistle.	Forged.	...	None.	1600	None.
	1 General Epistle to Hebrews.	Forged.	...	None.	1400	None.
Hermas,	1 Gospel.	Forged.	...	None.	1600	None.
Dionysius, The Areopagite,	1 Epistle.	Forged.	...	None.	...	...
Ignatius,	14 Works.	Forged.	...	None.	{ 1100 1400	None.
	15 Epistles.	12 Forged.	...	None.	1600	None.
Polycarp,	1 Epistle.	Forged.	...	None.	1600	None.

Out of these 38 works we find 34 are forged, while none of the alleged authors are mentioned by any pagan writer then living.

CHAPTER V

IN the second century we find a greater display of forgery than even in the first. Here, out of one hundred and forty-four books stated to have been written by Christians during the first eighty years of this century, no less than one hundred and thirty-seven are forgeries. And on an examination of the five works alleged by theologians to be genuine, there is every reason to believe that the supposed authors are mythical characters. There is certainly no historical evidence of their existence. When historical evidence is spoken of, *real* evidence is meant—evidence which would be permitted in a court of justice to-day to go before a jury in a criminal trial. No doubt it will be said this is absurd, for according to such a standard you can prove the existence of very few people in the past. But suppose that to be so, what does it matter whether the ordinary characters of history were real or mythical? The eternal happiness or misery of men does not depend upon such characters being real or mythical. But there *is* ample evidence to prove the existence of Greeks and Romans as historical nations; but, alas, when we apply the same class of evidence to prove the existence of Jesus and the Apostles, the entire records are seen to be utterly untrustworthy. Is it creditable to the upholders of Christi-

anity not to have one single genuine scrap of writing of the first one hundred and eighty years from the alleged foundation of their creed? But if it be discreditable to the teachers, what, may well be asked, is the effect on the alleged Founder? He, the maker of the universe, has allowed writings, dealing with other countries and religions, to exist for some five thousand years, telling mankind of events which happened in those distant times, and which the discoveries of the present day are corroborating most conclusively. Is it right? Is it fair? Is it rational? And although such strong corroboration of the writings of the long past is daily being discovered, not any corroboration can be found for the supernatural in either the New or the Old Testament. Out of two hundred and twenty-two works alleged to have been written during the first one hundred and eighty years of the present era, one hundred and eighty-two purport to be the labours of Christians living during that period; and of these one hundred and eighty-two works only twelve are now claimed by theologians to be genuine. The remaining one hundred and seventy are all forgeries, and admittedly written long after the deaths of their supposed authors. And of the forty pagan works only four mention the Christians; and of these four the allusions in three are maintained by a large number of scholars to be interpolations inserted centuries later by devout Christians. And even the fourth (*Pliny's Letter to Hadrian*) is open to the gravest suspicion of being a forgery. Certainly, when we find so great a facility for forgery existed in the early centuries of the present era, it is not unreasonable to require some very strong evidence before we separate these alleged twelve proofs from their one hundred and

seventy forged companions. If we take Butler's argument of probability, these four alleged pagan witnesses must be taken to be forgeries. Here we have pagan writers recording supernatural events, which they assert they searched for over the then known world. But not one word about Jesus, His miracles or Apostles. And this in the face of Tertullian's and other Christians' alleged assertions that the miraculous events at the crucifixion were mentioned in the Roman civic records. Can any reasonable man believe Tertullian? Would any modern jury convict any man on any charge supported by such evidence? Nay; such evidence would not be allowed to be put to a jury. And yet we are to believe that the author of the universe was so bereft of all justice as to give to men such a series of myths, forgeries and interpolations, and then to punish them through all eternity for not swallowing such lies. In the name of education, why not teach the clergy something of their own so-called ecclesiastical history? And not the clergy only, but the laity also.

The second century of the present era opens with the alleged writing or apology of Quadratus.

QUADRATUS.—This witness is stated to have been Bishop of Athens. This statement is made by Jerome, who is alleged to have lived about the year 400; and Eusebius says that Quadratus was the author of an apology to the Emperor Hadrian (117-138). This writing is not forthcoming, and it is only the quotation from Eusebius which can be produced in evidence. Now Eusebius did not scruple to occasionally manufacture, suppress and alter documents, as it seemed to him the requirements of Christianity demanded. Therefore, the

Fragment mentioned by him must be taken with great suspicion. And, furthermore, it must not be lost sight of, that where whole books of epistles were manufactured and pawned off upon a gullible people as genuine, the manufacture of a few lines here and there through Eusebius's works (supposing him not to have been guilty of the fraud) was a mere trifle to such adepts in the art of forgery as the Christians of the period between the second and thirteenth centuries. However, let us look at this quotation. A very slight examination will at once show it has put itself out of court, for it doth protest too much. Here it is:—

‘The deeds of our Saviour were always before you, for they were true miracles. Those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when healed and when raised, but were always present, they remained living a long time, not only whilst our Lord was on earth, but likewise when he had left the earth, so that some of them have also lived to our own times.’

When we consider what this implies, it becomes either the strongest proof of the truth of the supernatural events stated to have occurred, or it goes to show that all means, however base, were resorted to by the founders of Christianity to establish their religion. Here we have a positive assertion made to the Emperor of Rome, who had access to all the public records of Jerusalem, that certain persons were healed and others raised from the dead in the years 30-33, and in corroboration of the truth of that assertion appeal is made to some of those very persons as being alive at the time the assertion was made. Is it likely Hadrian would not have at once taken up the challenge, and sent for the records and those living witnesses of the miracles? And thus he

could have at once put to the test the truth of the Christians' statement. But though some forty pagan writers (most of whom were particular to gather all the tales and narratives of supernatural events) have left works from the beginning of the first century to the end of the second, not one solitary mention is made in any of their writings of a single case of the events recorded in this passage of Quadratus.

Again we have to call attention to Paley's—well, call them shortcomings. And this book of Paley's is still a—if indeed not *the*—standard work on Christian evidences. Not one word written by any of the modern theologians to correct such glaring errors; nothing said to the student that this passage is only handed down by Eusebius, and that, as that historian is not over scrupulous, too much reliance must not be placed on this extract. It is sad to think it becomes necessary to point out such a blemish in the text book of Christian evidences. But is it not a far sadder thought that, although one hundred years have elapsed since that book was written, no correction of this and other errors therein has seen the light at the hands of the theologians? Paley's words are:—

‘Quadratus, of the same age with Ignatius, has left us the following noble testimony:—

“The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real. Both those that were healed, and those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards, not only whilst He dwelled on this earth, but also after His departure, and for a good while after it, insomuch that some of them have reached to our times.”’

Not one word to say that no word of Quadratus is extant, or that the sentence is taken from the writings of a man who wrote some two hundred years after this alleged witness, and that that man is one who, to put it mildly, bears the character of having been slightly reckless with the truth. Any uninformed person reading Paley would at once conclude, and hundreds have, that Quadratus was a thoroughly well-known historical personage, about whose testimony there was not the shade of a shadow of a doubt.

ARISTIDES.—This witness is stated to have been a contemporary of Quadratus. But all we know of him comes from Eusebius and Jerome. He is said to have written an account of the martyrdom of St Dionysius. This of itself is only a proof of the mythical character of this alleged witness. Since it is altogether unknown whether Dionysius was a historical being or not, one modern writer says, ‘There is no improbability in the philosophical character assigned to him; but the story of his oration before Hadrian must in all likelihood be set down as an invention.’ But when we clip out one statement about a witness as an invention, may we not likewise remove all the other assertions? Thus we fear this witness must be relegated to the category of myths. In any case, he proves none of the supernatural events of Christianity.

IRENÆUS.—This witness is stated to have been born at the end of the first or beginning of the second century, and to have written a great number of works. But none are extant. True, we have a number of works alleged by Eusebius, Tertullian and others to be copies of some of

his lost works. According to Eusebius, his works were in being when he made these copies ; and it seems strange that these works of Irenæus should have been lost, but the works of Eusebius have been preserved. So that whatever evidence is produced as given by this witness must be regarded with the greatest suspicion. For Eusebius himself says he (Eusebius) was ‘the first of those that have entered upon the subject’ (ecclesiastical history), ‘we are attempting a kind of trackless and un-beaten path,’ and ‘whatsoever, therefore, we deem likely to be advantageous to the proposed subjects, we shall endeavour to reduce to a compact body by historical narration.’ But be Eusebius the most trustworthy historian on record, or whether, as the late Professor Blackie says, ‘his honesty as a historian was fiercely attacked by Gibbon ; and although other writers have defended him against the charge of dishonesty, Eusebius himself makes admissions that throw suspicion on the credibility of his history.’ The fact remains that Irenæus cannot be taken as of any value to prove the truth of the supernatural events of Christianity. There exists about his birth nothing but conjecture. Some assert he was born in the year 120, and others in 98. Again, he is said to have been martyred, and that assertion is just as strongly contradicted. One thing Irenæus’s alleged works certainly do. They give a completely different version of the life, age and death of Jesus from that generally accepted ; for in Dr Grabe’s *Irenæus* the following passage occurs :—

‘For He (Jesus) came to save all through Himself, all, I say, who through Him are born to God, infants, little children, boys, youths and old people. Therefore He preached in every stage of life, and became an infant with infants, sanctifying infants ; a child among children,

sanctifying those of the same age as Himself, and at the same time supplying an example to them of piety, of justice and of submission ; a youth among youths, becoming an example to youths, and sanctifying them to the Lord. So, also, an elder among elders, that the teacher might be perfect in all things, not only according to the exposition (law or rule) of truth, but also according to the period of life ; and sanctifying, at the same time, the elders, becoming an example to them. After that He came to death, that He might be the first-born from the dead, He Himself having pre-eminence in all things, the Prince of Life, above all, and excelling all. *But to establish their own forgery*, that it is written of Him, *to call (it ?) the acceptable year of the Lord*, they say against themselves that He preached (during) one year (only?), and suffered on the twelfth month (of it?). They have forgotten giving up every (important?) affair of His, and taking away the more necessary, the more honourable, and, I say, that advanced period of His in which, teaching diligently, He presided over all. For how did He obtain disciples if He did not teach? And how did He teach—not having attained the age of a master (or doctor)? For He came to baptism who had not yet completed thirty years of age (for thus Luke, who indicates His years, lays it down, and Jesus was, as it were, entering on thirty years when He came to baptism); and after (His) baptism, He preached only one year—on completing His thirtieth year He suffered (death), being as yet only a young man who had not attained maturity. But as the chief part of thirty years belongs to youth (or as a person of thirty years may be considered as a young man), and everyone will confess Him to be such until the fortieth year ; but from the fortieth to the fiftieth year He declines

into old age, *which our Lord having attained, He taught, as the gospel, and all the elders who, in Asia, assembled with John, the disciple of the Lord testify, and as John himself had taught them. And he (John?) remained with them till the time of Trajan. And some of them saw not only John, but other Apostles, and heard the same things from them, and bear the same testimony to this revelation.'*

Here Irenæus plainly accuses the writers of the New Testament of forgery, and denies that Jesus was crucified, but maintains He lived to fifty years of age. Now, if this be true, the entire narrative about Pontius Pilate, the darkness, the rending in twain of the veil of the temple, the earthquake and the raising of the saints are complete myths. If, on the other hand, this passage of Irenæus be a forgery, what guarantee have we that the rest of his alleged works are not also forgeries? But Irenæus contradicts himself; for, according to Eusebius, he writes in his work against heresies that Jesus Christ '*was crucified under Pontius Pilate.*' This is also the father to whom we are indebted for the tale of the marvellous translation of the Septuagint by the seventy, who, 'all of them rendered the same things in the very same expressions, and the same words, from the beginning to the end.' His proof of the Millenium is as follows:—

'Elders who had seen John, the Lord's disciple, have mentioned that they had heard from him how the Lord taught concerning these times, and said, The days shall come in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, and on each branch ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot ten thousand clusters, and on each cluster ten thousand grapes, and each grape, when pressed, shall yield twenty-five kilderkins' (metretas—twelve gallons) 'of

wine. And when anyone shall lay hold on any of these holy clusters, another will cry, I am a better cluster, take me, by me bless the Lord.' And it is on this witness's evidence Paley writes: 'The evidence now opens upon us full and clear.' Irenæus says that there cannot be more than four gospels, because there are four quarters of the earth, and four winds. Certainly the evidence is 'full and clear.'

PAPIAS.—There is the usual haziness about this witness's existence. The only fragments of his alleged writings which have come down to us are found in Eusebius. According to this latter, Papias saw a man raised from the dead. But that Eusebius did not place implicit reliance on all he writes about this witness may be inferred from the following passage:—

'The same historian (Papias) also gives other accounts, which he says he adds as received by him from unwritten tradition, likewise certain strange parables of our Lord and of His doctrine, and some other matters rather too fabulous.' This witness says, 'For I do not think that I derived so much benefit from books as from the living voice of those that are still surviving.' So that either the Gospels were then written, and Papias did not believe they were of much benefit to him, or he knew nothing about them, but was depending upon oral tradition. Of his alleged five books none are extant.

JUSTIN MARTYR.—This is the first witness on the orthodox side who tells something about himself. For in his alleged works he describes himself as having been born in Samaria. We say alleged works, for, out of fourteen books ascribed for centuries to him, only three

are now contended by theologians to be genuine. These are the two apologies, and the dialogue with Trypho. Throughout his works he alludes to *Memoirs of the Apostles*, and quotes sentences not to be found in any of the Gospels. But in several instances these sentences are found in the apocryphal gospels. In other instances he contradicts the Gospels. In one instance the phrase, 'which are called gospels,' occurs. This is admitted to be an interpolation. In his apology he says, 'And that Christ did these things, ye may learn from the records of what was done under Pontius Pilate.' And again, 'And that these things were done, ye may learn from the records of what took place under Pontius Pilate.' Now, this was an appeal to the Romans to refer to their own records, and ascertain the truth of the Christian miracles at the crucifixion. It is highly probable that if such records existed, some reference to them would be found in the works of those Roman writers who recorded the remarkable sayings and doings in those earlier times. But no such mention is made. Again Justin tries to prove, from Isaiah xxxiii. 16, that Christ must be born in a cave. And this cave Eusebius, Origen and others state was still shown in their day. (Strange that the Buddhists also assert that their Kishna was born in a cave.) That Justin's appeal to the Roman records was not much use, is shown by the fact of his having, as is alleged, been martyred. If the records could have been found, his statements would have been corroborated, and no doubt the Roman love of justice would have saved him. It must not be lost sight of that Justin was a most superstitious man. He believed firmly in witchcraft and sorcery. He discusses the erroneous method of the Jews in exorcising demons, as compared with the true means

adopted by the Christians. But beyond stating that the disciples saw Jesus going back into heaven, and quoting numerous passages from apocryphical gospels, and which passages, in a number of instances, contradict the canonical gospels, Justin does not prove the truth of the supernatural events alleged to have taken place at the foundation of Christianity. 'He does not mention a single writer of the eight who are said to have written the books of the New Testament.' So says Dr Giles. It may not be out of place to mention here one passage from this witness's works:—

'And then among us also a certain man whose name was John, one of the Apostles of Christ, in a revelation to him, prophesied that those who believed on our Christ would spend one thousand years in Jerusalem, and after this would be the general, and, to speak briefly, the eternal resurrection and the judgment of all men; which also our Lord has said, They shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be equal to the angels, being the children of the God of the resurrection.' Dr Giles, already referred to, writing on this passage, very pithily says, 'Is this the language of a writer who regarded *the* Revelation, and not *a* revelation of St John the divine, as a portion of the holy word of God, distinct from all other revelations whatsoever? Does Justin Martyr speak of the favourite Apostle John in these unseemly terms as *a certain man*; one John, as we might render it? The zeal of the commentators has here greatly damaged the books of the New Testament, by asserting that the early fathers quoted them, especially in such disparaging terms as these!'

But, may we ask, have these divine prophesies come true? More than one thousand years have elapsed since Justin's certain man named John had that revelation made

to him. Justin also states that this prophecy was corroborated by Jesus. But if so, Jesus was equally at fault with John. Better at once throw this witness's testimony away than make Jesus a false prophet. In one passage Justin uses the phrase, 'of his memorials;' whether he means Peter or Christ is uncertain. One commentator (Dr Otto) dealing with this word 'his,' says, if six hundred manuscripts were in favour of 'his,' he (Otto) would change it to 'their.' A truly theological method of shaping evidence to suit alleged facts; but it would hardly do before any man, sifting evidence with a view to ascertain the facts.

HEGESIPPUS.—About this witness nothing is known save what Eusebius tells, and what he says is merely an assertion that Hegesippus said he compiled a list of Roman bishops. Jerome also makes mention of works of this witness. But we do not consider these statements as bearing on the subject with which we are concerned. When we find in this second and following centuries such a luxurious crop of forgeries and interpolations, we must not allow ourselves to be lead away by any references in the works of the fathers. If these so-called apostolical fathers really wrote all these alleged works, and they were regarded of such great importance as to be read in the churches, why is it that, though Eusebius's, Jerome's, Origen's, Alexander's and all the other fathers' works are extant, none of these earlier, and therefore more reliable ones, are not forthcoming? Then we must remember that the gross ignorance and superstition of the fathers was quite sufficient to make them swallow any tale, no matter how contradictory to their experience.

THEOPHILUS, of Antioch, gives no evidence. He is the first to mention the Trinity and quotes the Sibyline books.

ATHANAGORAS.—This witness is mentioned for the first time in the fifth century by Philip Sidetes. Now this is the period when most of the spurious works were produced (some scholars now maintain that the most of the forgeries were produced in the fourteenth century); but no allusion by name is made to the Gospels or Christ, so that practically this witness has no evidence to give concerning the truth of the supernatural. This is the last witness we shall produce on the orthodox side, since he is about contemporary with the last pagan witness. He quotes the Sibyline books, in which the usual zeal of the early or other Christians for forgery is displayed.

CHAPTER VI

WE now come to a class of evidence which is only to be found in the annals of Christianity. We have already referred to the copious use of forgeries by the Christians of epistles and other works of the alleged apostolical fathers. But not content with this crop, the early Christians have given us no less than sixty-six apocryphical gospels and thirty-three apocryphical apostolical epistles. That these works were for centuries regarded as genuine is apparent from the quotations from them in the works of Justin Martyr and other fathers. Some of these gospels and epistles are forthcoming ; of others only portions remain. Recently, a portion of that according to Peter has been discovered. In this work we have the interesting fact stated that the cross had a voice, for the document says that three figures were seen coming from the tomb, the centre one towering above the other two, who seemed to be supporting the former, and following these there came the cross. A voice spoke from heaven asking had they done as commanded, when a voice from the cross said 'Yea.' Whether this be the speaking of the cross referred to by St Paul or not we leave to others to decide. But how are we to deal with these ninety-nine

admittedly false — nay, wilfully and corruptly false — witnesses? Shall we take them as a proof of the eagerness of the early Christians to exhibit their love of truth? or shall we take them as a reason why the Romans so despised these same Christians? Do such works in any way show that the Christians really were a pernicious set, as described by Suetonius? Or is the passage in Tacitus not forged, and is his description of them true? Here we have a set of men asserting that God had come down from heaven and done marvellous works, and inspired their leaders with the Holy Spirit, not hesitating to adopt the most dastardly line of conduct of which a man can well be capable. It is not so very long since forgery in the commercial world was punishable by death, and it is still regarded as a monstrous crime. But what language can be used of men who could absolutely stoop to hoodwink with such gross forgeries their fellow-men. And all this to enable their clergy to acquire power. There is a monastery at Mount Athos very properly called, or described as, the manufactory of manuscripts. There were formerly sixty thousand monks employed on that manufactory of manuscripts. Is it any wonder men of thinking and inquiring minds are driven from all respect for, and belief in, a religion in which such outrageous baseness can be tolerated? What proof is there that will stand investigation in the face of such a mass of forgery? Why must men believe the few books that the clergy say are canonical and genuine in preference to these ninety-nine, which are admitted to be older? The alleged miracles in the one set are just as contradictory to experience as those in the other.

It will be said, Oh, those detailed in the apocryphal

gospels are too childish to be true. Could anything be more childish than a man losing his temper because a fig tree had no fruit out of season, and cursing it? or his telling a man to catch a fish that he might discover in its mouth a piece of money to pay a tax? Why not have paid the tax and not trouble another man to catch a fish? And then comes the thought of the wanton killing of that fish. Is there any other religion which has such a record of forgeries? None; absolutely none. Mohammedism has one book; but where are its ninety-nine forged Korans? Buddhism has its Vedas, but not any forged ones. Zoroastrianism has its works, but its adherents have no confusing apocryphical works to worry and give them pause. No, it is only when we come to deal with the religion of the 'living God' that we find that the aid of the most despicable crimes has been brought copiously into requisition. And this is the religion we are to take on faith. And the men who investigate and find out these things are dubbed 'Atheists,' 'Infidels,' 'Agnostics' and so forth. If this be a specimen of the Church's love of truth, then so much the worse for the Church. And in the face of all these lies perpetrated by this same Church, we are told to be guided by the councils of this Church. The Council of Niceæ was composed of a set of bishops, whose sole object was to get preferment or some other advantage from Constantine. And so disgusted was that not over-scrupulous monarch with their complaints, that he ordered each bishop to reduce his complaint to writing. And when he had them all collected he ordered them to be burned, lest the world should know of the bishops' dissensions. And this council was held, according to Eusebius, in the year 325. Several hundred

bishops were present at this council, and yet there is not one single record forthcoming of any one of those numerous bishoprics or their churches in Roman, civic or municipal records. And this in the face of the fact that a Roman Emperor presided for several months over that council. Can this little narrative of Eusebius's be another instance of his reckless dealing with truth? Contentions, squabbles and disputes over words and texts form the business of the entire category of councils from that day to this. But where were the manuscripts of these apocryphal works found? It is remarkable that they have all been found in monasteries. Strange that though, according to Eusebius, fifty thousand copies of the New Testament were in use in the beginning of the fourth century, not one copy is now forthcoming. And the entire fifty thousand is now represented by some four or five *different* manuscripts. As to where these latter were made, theologians are completely in the dark. But when were they found? The reader may fancy in or about the early centuries of the present era. Nothing of the kind; from the fifteenth century on the finding commences.

And we are to believe that the Being, who so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son for it, was so forgetful of that world as to leave all records of His having done so hidden for some thirteen hundred years. But that is not all. Not content with letting men die in ignorance of his message during all those years, this same Being springs on the world a set of false documents, and allowed men to believe these documents to be genuine for centuries, and then changes His plans and allows another set of men to find out that nine-tenths of these works are false. Now, in the face of all

these forged gospels, epistles, letters and so forth, what reliance can be placed on the few remaining writings which theologians contend are true? The great work on which theology hangs is *Paley's Evidences*; but during the hundred years which have elapsed since Paley, what changes have not occurred in the world? Eusebius, Paley's great if not chief witness, is now, by some able men, relegated to the category of fictitious characters. In every mundane science text-books, which in our youth were standard works, are now regarded as obsolete; but in theology the text-book of one hundred years ago is still the standard work of to-day. Let us glance at a peculiarity about the two classes of witnesses whose evidence has been submitted. This peculiarity consists in the utter absence of reliable information concerning the witnesses on the side of the supernatural, while there is reliable information of the existence of the pagan witnesses. None of the Christian works are either dated or signed. No one contemporary with those Christian writers mentions them. All allusions to them are to be found in the writings of men who lived centuries after them. Look up in any book of reference or encyclopædia and the words 'supposed to have been' or 'supposed to have lived' are invariably found associated with these names. Their parentage is unknown, as also their country. All about them is vague and mythical. Reference has to be made to the mention by subsequent writers and these quotations from later 'Saints,' about whom there is just as great an air of myth and legend, and whose works are also most conveniently not forthcoming; and further, it is to be remarked that in some works of modern orthodox writers, not the slightest doubt as to the real existence of these

mythical apostolical fathers is apparent. To the ordinary uneducated reader no hint is given of the utter want of proof of the existence of such beings, but every statement is made as though there was not the least doubt or question as to these fathers having been real historical characters. In some instances one is forcibly reminded of the phrase, '*Suppressio veri suggestio falsi*'—The suppression of the truth, the suggestion of the false. But it is only fair to state that such treatment of the subject by modern writers is not, it is believed, intentional, but it simply springs from the firm faith those writers have in the absolute truth of the supernatural events at the time of the alleged foundation of Christianity. They are just like the Chinese, Buddhists, Parsees and other believers in supernatural religions. The more marvellous the alleged event, and the more it requires corroboration, the stronger grows their belief in its truth. As a clergyman once told the writer of these lines, when he asked him for some proof that St Paul was a real historical character, 'My dear friend, we must take it on faith.' Well, so far as we are concerned, it is utterly impossible to do so. Our nature simply rebels against being asked to accept myths as truths, and in matters theological this feeling becomes one hundredfold intensified. Now, contrast this want of historical corroboration in the case of these so-called early witnesses for Christianity with the amount of information concerning the witnesses on the other side. In a few instances there is an uncertainty about the country, birth and parentage of some of the pagan authors, but for a considerable majority there is clear evidence of their having been real historical characters. Out of over forty writers, more than

thirty-five are historical characters. Then consider another important matter; a great number of the works of these pagan writers are missing. Can this be accounted for? Yes; and the explanation does not redound much to the credit of the Christian witnesses. These Christian writers, whoever they were and whenever they wrote, were in the habit of using old manuscripts as materials on which to write, copy or forge some of the romances appertaining to Christianity. Now, be it observed the pagan writers never used Christian manuscripts, but always had clean parchment. The pagan manuscripts were scraped as clean as possible, so as to erase the original writing, then the Christian fiction was written over the other. These documents are called palimpsests. It has recently been discovered that a considerable amount of this erasing was carried on; and several pagan works have been partially restored by means of chemicals, which brought out the old writing. This proved that the Christian writing must have been of a much more recent date than the erased work, so it is easily seen how these pagan works have been lost. If any of them contained the slightest corroboration of the Christian miracles, think you they would have been erased? Certainly not. They would have been most carefully preserved and brought out with a great flourish of trumpets. But, as we have seen, though several pagan works are extant, none of those pagan authors make any mention of Jesus, His miracles, or Apostles. And this in the face of the fact that several of these writers were anxiously searching for and recording all the memorable events of which they could gain any information. And could there have been any more memorable event at the time of Hadrian

than the production of a number of people who had been raised from the dead? And that raising took place some eighty or ninety years before. Now Jesus raised three persons from the dead—Lazarus, the widow's son, and Jairus's daughter—so that, if Quadratus's evidence be true, two at least of these three were living in Hadrian's time, and not only living, but in the full use of their faculties, for what good could there be in Hadrian's appealing to a drivelling old centenarian? Taking Jairus's daughter as being the youngest of the three, and supposing her age, when raised, at twelve, she must have been, at the lowest estimate, ninety-two years of age in Hadrian's time; and yet, though several of the pagan writers lived at that time, and were attached to Hadrian's court, and were reminded of these alleged miracles by Christian apologists, silence on this subject reigns over all. This silence has not as yet been explained, at least by theologians. To us there is but one explanation, and that is, that all the Christian works of the first two centuries are forgeries, written centuries after. A great many people assert, when they have read a work of a sceptic, which deals with matters theological and opens up a new vista, before then utterly unknown to them, that while they cannot but admire the work, still it should not be given to the people generally; and when pressed for their reason, they are driven to the old threadbare statement, Lest it shake their faith. Their faith in what? Surely their faith is either true or false? If it be true nothing can shake it. Why then fear the reading of works, which as a general rule, enlarge the mind and make men think, and when men begin to think they begin to investigate. Investigation means reading, and reading results in en-

larging the mind, and enlarging the mind is only another term for education. But oh, before we spend the early years of mankind in imbibing tales of the supernatural, let us know those tales are true. It is a well-known fact that at the present time young men, when they are supposed to be educated, really only begin to learn. Their notions of the world as taught in youth are altogether reversed. The discoveries of Archæologists, Egyptologists and Assyriologists are now crowding so fast upon each other that the mythology taught in our grandfather's days is now being admitted into the annals of history; and all this in direct contradiction to the theological teachings.

One explanation for the absence of manuscripts of the New Testament earlier than the fourth century is, that the entire story was handed down by tradition. What tradition means we will try to explain. But we must impress on the reader that there is not one particle of evidence to prove any of the manuscripts were written in the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth or tenth centuries. And therefore, when theologians talk about the fourth century as the time of the writing of the New Testament, they are simply making a jump in the dark, and are just as ignorant of the real date of writing as we are.

It will not, we presume, be gainsayed that in every community, when any unusual occurrence takes place, the entire conversation of that community is, for some days at least, completely engrossed with the novelty and peculiarity of that occurrence. And, as a rule, where that community is ignorant, there the talk about that occurrence lasts not for days but years. And every member of that community in years after will not fail

to relate something of that occurrence to the then rising generation. Now this is what in the earliest days of mankind was known as tradition. And it is by means of such tradition that we are told the Gospels were handed down to us in their present state. But we ask, in all sincerity, where was the necessity? Writing was well known at the time Jesus was born. Greek and Roman writers abounded. Philo, the contemporary of Jesus, wrote several works, some of which have come down to us. In one of these he describes most elaborately two sets of men who inhabited Judea in his time. Essenes and Therapeuts. And are we to be told that such a man was going to pass over in silence all the wonders and miracles performed by Jesus? His silence becomes the more astonishing when it is considered that, according to the Gospels, the works of Jesus must, for three years in Jerusalem, have been one of the main topics of conversation among the common people. And when Philo gives such very elaborate descriptions of the Essenes and Therapeuts, it becomes impossible to believe he would wilfully omit all mention of Jesus and his followers. It seems to us, therefore, that the theory of tradition does not and cannot account for the absence of written records of the works and sayings of Jesus. Theologians tell us that the earliest ones we possess are not of an earlier date than the fourth century. They say that these are the outcome of the traditions of the preceding 350 years. But, if so, how does it happen that the epistles of the apostolical fathers were reduced to writing in the first century? And what are we to say of the public records of Edessa, in which are transcribed the letters of Agbarus and Jesus? The tremendous efforts of theologians to prove the genuineness of the

Ignation epistles is an admission on their part that tradition had nothing to do with these epistles. And why the Author of the Universe should alone be depending on tradition for the records of his works has not yet been, by any means, satisfactorily explained. Men who wrote five centuries before the alleged birth of Jesus are not depending on it. Why, then, should Jesus be depending on it?

Let common sense have a little play in matters theological, and human reason guide our thoughts, in at least some slight degree, and it will be seen how shallow is the theological argument of tradition.

CHAPTER VII

AND now we appeal to the reader for his verdict. The evidence in favour of the historical truth of the events supernatural, as recorded in the New Testament, has been given. Is that evidence of such a strong and convincing nature as to leave no doubt on the reader's mind? Is there any proof that Jesus and His disciples were real—not imaginary characters? Is there any work extant which was *undoubtedly* written in or about the first half of the first century? Is the author of that book known to have been a real historical person of that period? And does that book contain any genuine statement about Jesus, His works and disciples, which puts the fact of their existence beyond question? All these inquiries can only be answered by reference to the writers we have briefly touched upon in these lines. And when the reader has carefully studied those writers' works, he will be in a position to form an opinion. When the evidence of the pagan witnesses is contrasted with that of the Christian, one is forcibly struck with the weakness of the latter. Would any man trying a fellow-man of murder be satisfied of that man's guilt on no stronger evidence than general statements in manuscripts written,

no one knows when or by whom? Or, to put it even more strongly, in favour of the Christians, admitting the writings of the early fathers to be the real works of real men, is there sufficient evidence in those works to satisfy a reasonable man that the story of the New Testament is true? But even this cannot be allowed to go to the jury. For the Christian writings of the first century are all forgeries. Now bear in mind for a moment what is required in the way of proof in a case of murder. The evidence of two eye-witnesses. And these men must be prepared to stand a thorough investigation into their character. Or, if no eye-witness comes forward, then circumstantial evidence may be given. But it must be of the very strongest kind. And even then the jury are told that, if there be the slightest doubt, they are to give the prisoner the benefit of that doubt. It is a well-recognised axiom: Better let one hundred criminals escape than hang one innocent man. And in this investigation into the historical existence of Jesus and His disciples, there is so much uncertainty, so great a lack of real evidence, together with such a fearful amount of false evidence, that no man dare dogmatically assert they ever existed. And are sceptics to be run down and despised because they exercise their undoubted right to investigate and come to the firm conclusion, based upon an examination of the records, that Christianity is simply another instance of history repeating itself. All religions before Christianity arose from myths. Christianity is no better. But alas that it should be so, it is rather worse. And why? Because it alone has resorted to the crime of forgery. Theologians may try to bolster it up as best they can, but the ugly fact remains, that forgeries are to be found amongst the so-called Christian records. Don't

say its teachings are sublimer than those of its numerous predecessors. Where is the sublimity of forgery? And even if there were no forgery, Christianity has simply borrowed from its predecessors. Why is there this dreadful outcry against investigation? If its foundation be, as theologians assert, the outcome of a divine author of the universe, that foundation should be made of sterner stuff than to crumble into the dust of myths, forgeries and interpolations at the touch of investigation. But we are asked to accept all the statements of the birth, life, death, etc., etc., of Jesus and His disciples as implicitly true; while, on evidence similar to that adduced, no jury would nor could convict any man, nowadays, of the pettiest crime. And yet we are to believe that man is to be punished hereafter for not swallowing the story. And be it borne in mind that all this talk of future bliss and torment is founded on the very works which won't stand investigation. When a sceptic points to a Christian hypocrite, he is told that only proves the rule that Christianity is true. Christian hypocrites generally are so for filthy lucre's sake. Now, will anyone show a case where any man ever became an agnostic for filthy lucre's sake? We hear a lot about the Bible being true, because it tells a great amount of the evil men do, and that if it were written by men merely, it would hide all those blemishes. Does Hume tell the truth in his history? And yet he was an Agnostic. Does Gibbon tell the truth? Or Mosheim? Have they concealed the ill men did? Does the Church shine in great glory as depicted by Gibbon or Mosheim? But look carefully at the evidence for the supernatural. The entire framework on which that evidence is based consists of fraud. Clergymen may try to palliate it, but the ugly

fact remains that, out of one hundred and eighty-two works accepted for centuries as being the genuine writings of Christians during the first one hundred and eighty years of the present era, only twelve are now contended by theologians to be genuine. Just think of it. One hundred and seventy forged writings permitted, by the alleged Guider into all Truth, to have existed for centuries and believed in by poor, feeble men. And the wrangling over the remaining twelve books is allowed to go on to the very serious detriment of those same books. Nay, the very New Testament itself is now struggling for bare existence. But then it is at best only the outcome of the fourth century. And notwithstanding their long practice in the art of forgery, its authors have not been able to avoid the most glaring interpolations. But we need not consider the New Testament if the characters of which it treats cannot be proved to have been real historical personages. And certainly, from the perusal of the four Clementine and Ignatian works, supposed by theologians to be genuine, and alleged to have been written in the first century, no evidence is obtained worthy of a jury's consideration. And as to the eight works of the second century alleged to be genuine Christian writings, they rather go to prove the falsehood of the story. That is supposing them to be genuine. For they appeal to Roman records, and which records, judging from the absence of mention by Roman authors, did not exist. But even these twelve books are not admitted to be genuine. And thus, as jurymen, we are landed in this dilemma, that we have no evidence on the positive side upon which to rely. And when we examine the works of the so-called heathen authors, we find in their writings no mention of Jesus and His disciples. True, there are

four works in which passages occur mentioning the word Christians. But these passages, even if genuine, which we doubt, do not prove the historical existence of Jesus and His disciples. It is a favourite argument with Christians too lazy to investigate these subjects, or indifferent to the teachings they say they believe in, to reply, Oh, when such great men as the various bishops and high ecclesiastics of the day tell us these things are true, they must be right, and have examined the subject far more deeply than a mere layman. But these same Christians forget that bishops and other ecclesiastics have never been free to examine this subject dispassionately. They are living by the Church, and are sworn to abide by its teachings. Don't let it be imagined we imply they are not thoroughly conscientious and believe implicitly in the truth of the supernatural. But belief in a thing or theory does not prove the truth of the object of that belief or theory. The Hindoo believes in Buddha, the African in his God, the Chinese in his, and so on through all religions. But does the mere belief prove those various gods exist or ever did exist? And so, in considering the truth of the supernatural events of Christianity, all regard for belief must be discarded. The terrible fact remains, no matter how we may gloss it over, that lies, falsifications, superstition, plagiarism and forgeries underlie, if, indeed, they do not form, the foundation of Christianity. Ask the thinking layman of the day what his ideas are on the subject of the Old Testament, and he will tell you that that book cannot be taken as true. Nay, even such men as Professor Sayce admit that the taking of Babylon, as told in the Book of Daniel, is not historical. And this is the conclusion from the examination of the tablets of Tel-el-Amarna. And what

will be the result of further investigation into the records of the past, by modern exploration, it is not hard to divine. What was formerly regarded as mythology in Egyptian history, is now being proved to be real history. But the strange thing about Christianity is, that the works which for centuries were regarded as, and firmly believed to be, inspired, are, on investigation, proved to be myths, or, what is far worse, forgeries. So we find the works of the living God disimprove, while those of the heathens improve, on investigation.

Just contemplate calmly what is implied in the fact that, out of one hundred and eighty-two works, at one time believed to be true genuine writings of the alleged authors, one hundred and seventy are now admitted by *all* scholars to be wilful forgeries. But it must not be forgotten that nearly the entire of the Christian evidence of almost the first two centuries are only to be found in the writings of Eusebius. To show the reader the class of historian this bishop of the Church was, we will quote the thirteenth chapter of his *Ecclesiastical History*.* We trust the reader will carefully study this extract, as in it Eusebius deliberately asserts he took the letters therein quoted from the public records of the town of Edessa, which records he asserts were in existence in his day. Now, the time he is alleged to have written was about the year 340. So here we see that, notwithstanding all the persecutions of the three centuries which elapsed from the time of Jesus to that of Eusebius, these public records remained intact. Surely such a proof of the existence of Jesus, as his own handwriting, should, if genuine, have been preserved. But save in Eusebius no mention is made of this most extraordinary correspondence between

* See Appendix.

Jesus and Agbarus. Justin Martyr, nor Tertullian, nor yet even Quadratus refer to it in their apologies to the Roman emperors. We ask the reader does he believe it to be true? If not, then what becomes of the rest of his works? Could anything be more positive, more explicit, than his assertion of having been at Edessa, and there having copied these letters from the public records? No wonder the late Professor Blackie says of Eusebius:— ‘His honesty as an historian was fiercely attacked by Gibbon; and although other writers have defended him against the charge of dishonesty, Eusebius himself makes admissions that throw suspicion on the credibility of his history.’

There are several other passages contained in this most veracious history which we could cite to prove the truth of the late professor’s statement, but must refer the reader to the history itself. When we come to deal with the writings of the early fathers themselves, we cannot but be struck with the amazing superstition and great ignorance that permeates their entire works. How can any reliance be placed on the statements of such men? However, the labour would no doubt not be a very onerous one since we only have some four epistles to read, so far as the first century is concerned. And what are those works? Well, so far as evidence is concerned, they need scarcely be taken into account. We have already seen that beyond alluding to Jesus, and Peter, and Paul, there is not one single corroboration of any of the events mentioned in the four Gospels. True, they casually mention the resurrection as though it were a thoroughly recognised fact. But a witness making a statement is not of itself a proof of the truth of that statement. It must be corroborated by independent testimony. And

here it is where Christian history fails. Outside these early fathers no evidence is forthcoming.

We look in vain through the records of pagan writings, and though there is ample evidence of the search after the miraculous, in no work can any really reliable mention be found of a single miraculous event as recorded in the Gospels. Mark, we say, 'reliable mention.' For what reliance can be placed on the four references to the Christians which are to be found in the works of Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny? Are these paltry statements all that it is likely such acute observers as the pagan authors of that day would have let come down to us? Just think the matter over calmly. Look at the amount of matter we find recorded all through those pagan works. The most elaborate descriptions of lunar eclipses, storics of the marvellous, collated from all the then known countries of the world. And yet not one word of that great rising of the dead at Jerusalem, nothing about that earthquake, but, most surprising of all, not a reference, in the most remote or faintest degree, to that supernatural darkness. Whether that darkness were spread all over the world, as is stated in the Gospels, or only over Palestine, makes not the slightest matter. The point we are here insisting on is, the utter and inexplicable silence of these pagan writers. To our way of thinking, the mention of the Christians by these authors goes to prove that the doings of the Christians were so insignificant, and trivial, that these pagan writers did not consider them worthy of record.

Up to this we have been treating these four allusions in pagan writings as beyond the pale of suspicion. But it must not be forgotten that Christians of the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth centuries were imbued with a great

zeal to perfect the records of their religion. And as is usual where all is allowed full sway, the Christian's zeal outran his discretion. For it is an admitted fact, that during this period a considerable number of spurious writings were manufactured. And for centuries these writings were firmly believed to be the genuine works of men whose names were attached to them. And if writings of a religious nature were thus manufactured wholesale, are we to suppose that there would be any hesitation about inserting into a pagan work a few words to try and corroborate their own spurious writings? The very phrase, 'pious fraud,' so frequently found in theological controversial works answers the question in the affirmative. Let us hope that the theological argument, if argument it can be called, will not be used. 'Oh, God in his own good purposes saw fit to permit those things to be done.' Such a statement only goes to show how weak the theological case must be. Bear in mind, the whole question is treated purely from a human point of view. It is men only we are arguing. And therefore theological, transcendental niceties are out of place, and cannot be admitted. This work is simply one for ordinary men engaged in the ordinary occupations of everyday life. They have to deal with their fellow-men as reasonable beings. And as reasonable beings they must be dealt with. And therefore, to lay down those fine-drawn distinctions, to be met with in most theological works, is entirely out of place. When one comes to consider the general tone of the writings of the day, a very great freedom of thought on matters theological becomes at once apparent. But look carefully through modern theological writings and see what mention is to be found in them of all these pious Christian frauds? Is anything said

about that most energetic writer of the sixth century, the author of the works of Dionysius the Areopagite? By 'modern theological' of course are meant those writings in defence of Christian doctrines. There are clergymen who have had the courage of their convictions. Such for instance is that writer already quoted, the Rev. Dr Giles. He, though writing in favour of the truth of Christianity, makes admissions which completely corroborate the propositions here contended for. To show that this is not an over-drawn assertion, we think it may be not out of place to give an extract from what he says about Dionysius the Areopagite.

'I have said that the writings of the apostolical fathers were once ten times as bulky as at present. The assertion does not pass due bounds, for under that title were once included the works of Dionysius the Areopagite, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and occupying two large folio volumes. When these works, consisting of religious dissertations, had for many hundred years passed as authentic throughout all Christendom, and had even been painfully translated into Latin by Rufinus, the celebrated presbyter of Aquileia, a sudden shock was given to the feelings of those who believed in these mysterious volumes. Truth laid its wand upon them and they disappeared from the sight, leaving to their author the narrow limits of fame which he occupies in the Acts of the Apostles—limits beyond which he should never been compelled to go: for, as an enlightened man and one of the first to recognise the truth of Christianity, his reputation has more brilliancy than all the theological treatises in the world, even if authentic, could bestow. The works of Dionysius the Areopagite were found out to be forgeries, put together, perhaps,

by some pious but ill-principled devotee, who thought that the paucity of writings in the first century of the Christian era was a defect which might be better supplied by fraud than the void be suffered to remain. With the works of Dionysius the Areopagite nine-tenths of primitive Christian writings lost all claim to authenticity: and about 250 pages, as given in the edition of Hefele, were now all that remained of what had once been ascribed to the pens of the contemporaries of the apostles.' *

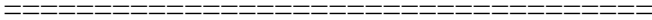
Thus we see how even a defender of the Christian dogmas has admitted the forgeries and frauds of early Christians. But, even while making these admissions, he does not see that he has opened the door to an inquiry the most damaging to Christianity, though most salutary to the investigation of truth. Once admit that your witnesses are capable of even prevarication, and that moment doubts are cast over the entire of those witnesses' testimony. But when, instead of prevarication, forgery the most glaring, and superstition the most amazing, is found to permeate the entire evidence, our verdict on that evidence can only be, even putting it most favourably for the Christian witnesses, the Scotch one of 'Not Proven.'

* *Christian Records*, ch. xi. p. 109.

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APPENDIX

NARRATIVE RESPECTING THE PRINCE OF EDESSA

CHAPTER XIII. of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*.—The divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, being famed abroad among all men in consequence of his wonder-working power, attracted immense numbers, both from abroad and from the remotest parts of Judea, with the hope of being cured of their diseases and various afflictions. Agbarus, therefore, who reigned over the nations beyond the Euphrates with great glory, and who had been wasted away with a disease both dreadful and incurable by human means, when he heard the name of Jesus frequently mentioned, and his miracles unanimously attested by all, sent a suppliant message to him by a letter-carrier, entreating a deliverance from his disease. But though he did not yield to his call at that time, he nevertheless condescended to write him a private letter and to send one of his disciples to heal his disorder, at the same time promising salvation to him and all his relatives. And it was not long, indeed, before the promise was fulfilled. After the resurrection,

however, and his return to heaven, Thomas, one of the twelve apostles by a divine impulse, sent Thaddeus, who was also one of the seventy disciples, to Edessa as a herald and evangelist of the doctrines of Christ. And by his agency all the promises of our Saviour were fulfilled. Of this also we have the evidence, in a written answer, taken from the public records of the city of Edessa, then under the government of the king. For in the public registers there, which embrace the ancient history and the transactions of Agbarus, these circumstances respecting him are found still preserved down to the present day. There is nothing, however, like hearing the epistles themselves taken by us from the archives, and the style of it, as it has been literally taken by us from the Syriac language :—

COPY OF THE LETTER WRITTEN BY KING AGBARUS TO JESUS AND SENT TO HIM AT JERUSALEM BY ANANIAS, THE COURIER.

AGBARUS, prince of Edessa, sends greeting to Jesus, the excellent Saviour, who has appeared in the borders of Jerusalem. I have heard the reports respecting thee and thy cures, as performed by thee without medicines and without the use of herbs. For, as it is said, thou causest the blind to see again, the lame to walk, and thou cleansest the lepers, and thou castest out impure spirits and demons, and thou healest those that are tormented by long disease, and thou raisest the dead. And hearing all those things of thee, I concluded in my mind one of two things ; either thou art God and, having descended from heaven, thou doest these things,

or else, doing them, thou art the son of God. Therefore, now I have written and besought thee to visit me, and to heal the disease with which I am afflicted. I have also heard that the Jews murmur against thee, and are plotting to injure thee. I have, however, a very small but noble state, which is sufficient for us both.

This epistle he thus wrote whilst yet somewhat enlightened by the rays of divine truth. It is, also, worth the time to learn the epistle sent to him from Jesus by the same bearer, which, though very brief, is yet very nervous, written in the following style:—

THE ANSWER OF JESUS TO KING AGBARUS BY THE
COURIER ANANIAS :—

Blessed art thou, O Agbarus, who, without seeing, hast believed in me. For it is written concerning me that they who have seen me will not believe, that they who have not seen may believe and live. But in regard to what thou hast written, that I should come to thee, it is necessary that I should fulfil all things here for which I have been sent. And after this fulfilment thus to be received again by Him that sent me. And after I have been received up I will send to thee a certain one of my disciples that he may heal thy affliction, and give life to thee and to those who are with thee.

To these letters there was also subjoined, in the Syriac language :—‘ After the ascension of Jesus, Judas, who is also called Thomas, sent him Thaddeus, the apostle, one of the seventy, who, when he came, remained at the

house of Tobias, the son of Tobias. When the report was circulated concerning his arrival, and he became publicly known by the miracles which he performed, it was communicated to Agbarus that an apostle of Jesus had come hither as he had written. Thaddeus, therefore, began in the power of God to heal every kind of disease and infirmity, so that all were amazed. But when Agbarus heard the great deeds and miracles which he performed, and how he healed in the name and power of Jesus Christ, he began to suspect that this was the very person concerning whom Jesus had written, saying, After I have been received up again I will send to thee one of my disciples, who shall heal thy affliction. Having, therefore, sent for Tobias, with whom he stayed, I have heard, said he, that a certain powerful man who hath come from Jerusalem is staying at thy house and is performing many cures in the name of Jesus. He answered, Yea, my lord, a certain stranger has come who hath lodged with me and is performing many wonders. And he replied, Bring him unto me. Tobias then has told me to conduct thee to him that thou mayest heal his disorder. And Thaddeus replied, I will go, since I have been sent with power, to him. Tobias, therefore, arose early the next day, and taking with him Thaddeus, came to Agbarus. When he came his nobles were present and stood around. Immediately on his entrance something extraordinary appeared to Agbarus in the countenance of the apostle Thaddeus; which Agbarus observing, paid him reverence. But all around were amazed, for they did not perceive the vision which appeared to Agbarus alone: he then asked Thaddeus if he were truly a disciple of Jesus, the son of God, who had said to him, I will send one of my

disciples to thee, who will heal thy sickness, and will give to thee and to all thy connections? And Thaddeus answered, Since thou hast had great confidence in the Lord Jesus, who hath sent me, therefore I am sent to thee. And, moreover, if thou believest in him with increasing faith, the petitions of thy heart shall be granted thee as thou believest. And Agbarus replied, So much did I believe in him that I had formed the resolution to take forces in order to destroy those Jews who had crucified him, had I not been deterred from my purpose by a regard for the Roman Empire. Thaddeus replied, Our Lord and God, Jesus the Christ, hath fulfilled the will of his Father, and having fulfilled it, was taken up again to his Father. Agbarus saith to him, I have believed both in him and in his Father. Then said Thaddeus, Therefore I place my hand upon thee in the name of the same Lord Jesus. And this being done, he was immediately healed of the sickness and sufferings with which he was afflicted. And Agbarus was amazed that, just as he had heard respecting Jesus, so in very deed he received it through his disciple and apostle Thaddeus, who had healed him without any medicine and herbs, and not only him but Abdas also, the son of Abdas, who was afflicted with the podagra. He, also approaching, fell down at his feet and received his benediction with the imposition of his hand, and was healed. Many of the same city were also healed by the same apostle, who performed wonderful and great deeds, and proclaimed the word of God. After this said Agbarus, Thaddeus, thou doest these things by the power of God, and we are filled with wonder. But, beside these things, I request thee also to inform me respecting the coming of Jesus, how he was born, and as

to his power, with what power he performed these things which we have heard. And Thaddeus answered, Now, indeed, I will not tell thee, since I have been sent to proclaim the word abroad, but to-morrow assemble all thy citizens and before them I will proclaim the word of God, and will sow among them the word of life both respecting the coming of Jesus, as he was, and respecting his mission, and for what purpose he was sent by the Father; also concerning the power of his works, and the mysteries which he declared in the world; by what power, also, he did these things, concerning his new mode of preaching, his lowly and abject condition, his humiliation in his external appearance; how he humbled himself, and died and lowered his divinity; what things, also, he suffered from the Jews; how he was crucified and descended into hell (Hades), and burst the bars which had never yet been broken, and rose again, and also raised with himself the dead which had slept for ages. And how he descended alone, but ascended with a great multitude to his Father. And how he sitteth at the right hand of God and the Father with glory in the heavens; and how he is about to come again with glory and power, to judge the living and the dead. Agbarus, therefore, commanded his subjects to be called early in the morning, and to hear the annunciation of Thaddeus; and after this he commanded gold and silver to be given him; but he would not receive it, saying, If we have left our own how shall we take what belongs to others?' These things were done in the three hundred and fortieth year. Which also we have literally translated from the Syriac language, opportunely as we hope, and not without profit.

Alleged Works of Christians, stated to have been written during the first eighty years of the Second Century.

ALLEGED AUTHOR'S NAME.	WORKS EXTANT.	MISSING.	FORGED.
Papias, . . .	...	All.	...
Quadratus, . . .	...	All.	...
Diognetus, . . .	1 Epistle.	...	Forged.
Hegesippus, . . .	...	All.	...
Justin Martyr, . . .	14	...	11
Aristides, . . .	...	All.	...
Irenæus, . . .	...	All.	...
Athenagoras, . . .	2	...	...
Theophilus, . . .	9	...	6
Sibyline Oracles, . . .	5	...	5
Gospels, . . .	66	...	66
Epistles, Acts of } Apostles and } Revelations, }	33	...	33
Letters of Seneca } to Paul, . . . }	14	...	14

So that out of 144 works we find 136 are forgeries, and 8 only, it is now contended by theologians, are genuine; and this after all these 144 works having been taught by former theologians to have been the *bonâ-fide* writings of real historical characters. How long, we may well ask, will it be ere the 8 join their brethren?