

THE
BIBLE EXPOSED

BY

ERASMUS.

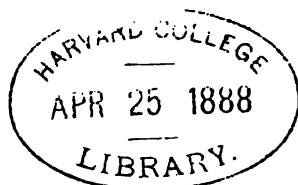
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P R E F A C E.

THE bible, also called the holy Scriptures, is, as its name *holy* shows, held in great reverence by the Christian population. The Christians in general believe that every thing the bible states, was written down by holy men, inspired by the spirit of God. A few amongst them will admit that some parts of the book bear the stamp of mere human origin, but still on the whole they consider the bible to be a godly book. Comparatively speaking, there are only a very small number of men who do not believe at all in its godliness. Hence the great reverence this book is receiving.

The author of the following pages does not participate in the general admiration of the Scriptures ; for, though brought up in the Christian creed, and even with great solicitude of the part of his friends to make of him a devout Christian, he notwithstanding, has always felt, even from earliest childhood, an instinctive distrust concerning the godliness of the accounts which the bible contains. They always seemed to him to sound very strange and fabulous, and the actions ascribed to the biblical God appeared to him exceedingly unjust and ungodlike. In consequence of this impression, he never liked the bible, and never since cared much about that book, nor about what may have been written either in its favor or disfavor. Neverthe-

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less, some time ago, the idea occurred to him to investigate for himself, whether or not the prophecies, wherewith the Christians presume to prove the authenticity of their creed, were visibly falsified, or wrongfully expounded.

With this view he took a Jewish bible in hand, in order to peruse the prophecies, as well there, as in the Christian translations. By reading the principal parts, the author soon discovered that none of the prophecies, said to foretell the coming of a Christ, ever related to the man Jesus of Nazareth, but either related to a great king, who, as supposed by the Jewish prophets, should come forth out of the race of David, and should reunite the (then severed) kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and destroy all their enemies. This king should be a great hero and a wise statesman, so that under his reign Israel should greatly prosper and return to the splendor which it was supposed to have been in, when the first king David reigned. Now, the mighty hero and king (David the second) never has made his appearance, but this therefore does not give a right to the Christians to say that the fisherman of Nazareth was the person meant ; since Jesus never reigned as king, neither over Israel, nor over Judah, nor over both united. Nor has he slain any of the enemies of these peoples ; and, moreover, he was no descendant of David, since the Christian doctrine teaches that he was offspring of the holy Ghost.

Further, there are some other so-called prophecies, which the Christians say prove the divine mission of Jesus, but which are nothing more than a few words arbitrarily extracted from sentences, in the midst of some chapters, without the slightest consideration about what is spoken of in such places. By a careful reading of such passages the reader will at once see how the Christians are mistaken. Other prophecies, again, said to relate to Jesus, are those in which is spoken of

Israel (where the nation is represented as a person). For often Israel is called in the bible God's first-born son (Exod. iv., 22.), meaning God's chosen son — now, wherever the words "God's son" appear, they are eagerly taken up by the Christians as a prophecy of their favorite Lord.

In chapter LIII. of Isaiah, Israel is likewise spoken of. The prophet compares him there to a poor leper, repulsed by every one, and suffering greatly of the disease that others have brought upon him. The prophet speaks thus in order to represent the contempt wherewith Israel is treated by other nations. The disease whereof he speaks, alludes to the idolatry which existed in Israel, but which was brought thither by the other nations. And because the prophet, by further representing the other nations as repenting, lets them say "and for our sin was he chastised" (namely for our idolatry), therefore the Christians thought themselves justified to declare that Jesus, the fisherman of Nazareth, bore the punishment of the sins of mankind. If, however, any body will take the trouble of reading this chapter in connection with some few preceding pages, he will soon discover, that no prophecy of Jesus is alluded to. It is nevertheless the only so-called prophecy which the Christian can show forming a regular account of some thing; and as the writers of the history of Jesus, have taken good care to represent him as an innocent sufferer, teaching that his death was for the sins of others, it is true that, by a first perusal, many will not know what to think of this chapter, but when taking it in connection with the preceding ones they will readily find the real meaning of it.

The author having thus ascertained that there exists in fact not a single prophecy to prove the truth of the Christian creed, continued his perusal in other parts of the Scriptures, so as to discover what could have induced the people to believe this book to come from

God. Was it on account of its sublimity ? the prophecies did not show much of it, as they mostly contain nothing but threatenings and terrible curses, or promises of as impossible blessings; containing more of the ravings of madmen than of godly wisdom ; and of all that they say, nothing has, until now, ever occurred.

Reading further the historical part of the Scriptures, the author found nothing but coarse and fabulous stories, full of contradictions and total impossibilities, and an infinity of tales of slaughter and murder, and of beastly immorality. And the hymns, what are they ? nothing but highflown assertions, touching Jehova's might and his love for Israel and their king David, and his hatred of all other nations, even of all other human beings.—And shall the author, furthermore, say what he thinks of the New Testament ? It gives some good precepts, but just as many bad ones, and is, from beginning to end, full of the grossest sophistry.

Reflecting thereupon how much harm this so-called holy book has caused in the world for how many religious wars has it not caused, and what harassing disputes has it not continually kept alive ;—and how many families has it not rent asunder, and how much blood and tears has it not caused to be spilt ;—and what dreadful vices of fanaticism has it not brought into society ;—and how many individuals has it not sent to convents, to prisons for life ;—and above all, how fatally has it, and does it still, oppose the progress of true civilization, the civilization of the mind, by not allowing people to make free use of their reason, though the fairest gift of Providence ? When reflecting on all this, the author hated the bible, and wished to be able to deprive it of its influence. This, of course, could not be done, since its influence is too wide spread.

Yet to do something, the author concluded to expose the impositions of that so-called holy book, and that, only by rehearsing,

in other words, all what it lays down, with but few comments; for most people believe in the bible merely because they are not acquainted with the absurdities, the contradictions, and base precepts it contains.—Reading the same things in an other book, they will confront it with the original, and finding the comments to be true, their eyes will get opened; and they will soon despise that book of imposition as much as they did revere it before.

If no respect is shown, in these pages, for the biblical god, the reader must not derive therefrom that the author does not believe in the existence of a Supreme Being; for he believes therein; and does so by consulting his reason; for nature shows that every thing is made with an order and a design which prove a thinking power to exist in the Universe; — but, he does not believe in the whimsical caricature that Moses represents as the Creator of all things; this foolish representation he views in the same light as he does the other idols of antiquity; which were merely invented by priests in order that they might rule over the many.

Some people may object to this way of treating the bible; “for,” they will say, “if we no longer respect the bible, how shall we teach our children religion.” — Hereupon the author answers, “teach your children religion from nature, for this is the Bible which the Godhead gave us.” He gave us not a printed book, in which only those can read who learned to read and who were enabled to buy the book, but he gave us the great Book of Nature, wherein every one can read, according to the capacity of his intellect. Those whose intellect is more advanced, will, of course, read more than others; therefore teach your children the natural sciences, as chemistry and physics, and geology and astronomy, and in degree that their intellect is becoming more developed, they will draw from these sciences teachings of moral philosophy, which

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will excel by far all the moral teachings of Christianity; thus you will see them become really more religious than all the frightful threatenings of the Christian creed would ever be able to make them.

The Author has added to this work some of his own ideas, touching Natural Religion, in an Appendix, so as to show, that he is no Atheist, and also to prevent people of accusing him of being anxious to throw all religion down.

THE AUTHOR.

NEW YORK, May 16, 1861.

NOTE. The Bible used in composing this work, is the translation published by the *American Bible Society*, and the Jewish translation of *Isaac Leeser*, of Philadelphia (1853), the old English translation has likewise occasionally been consulted.

THE BIBLE EXPOSED.

GENESIS.

CHAPTER I.—“IN the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” With these potent words Moses commences his narrative of the creation, leaving it to the imagination of the reader to make out what sort of a being this mentioned God was, and from whence he came, or who created him; as well as where he kept his abode before the creation of heaven and earth. Besides this, Moses might have informed us how many years had elapsed since there was that beginning. We shall, however, consider these first words as merely intended to head the chapter, and thus proceed. We read: “And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”—By this we know at once that the shapeless mass was made. In what manner it was made, and from whence the materials came it was made of, this Moses does not explain, though it would have been rather instructive; and seeing that he was still divulging a part of the secrets of God, he might have instructed us a little more. Moses continues—“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”—The Spirit of God means, we should think, the Soul of God, for there cannot exist any other sensible meaning for the word. In all other living beings, the soul (or the immaterial principle) remains united with the body, as when it parts, then the body dies. But this, as we discover, was not the case with the Mosaical God; for while he busied himself with the Creation, he allowed his Soul to refresh itself upon the waters. The Mosaical God, and his Spirit, thus having existed for a space of time (how long we do not know) in utter darkness (and, as it appears, faring well thereby,) suddenly got a fancy to create light.—“Let there be light,” quoth he, and lo, there was light. And God saw the light that it was good, and he divided the light from the darkness, calling the light Day and the darkness Night.—Now that the Mosaical God had the light to enlighten him, he perceived, as it appears, how useful it would be to have an open space in the midst of the waters, for (as is to be seen from v. 6 till v. 10) the whole extent of the universe was nothing but one large mass of waters in that time; underneath of which very large sea the earth was buried.—And God said, “let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters,” and God made the firmament and divided the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament.—This, it is plain, means he made a horizontal cut through the midst of the great water-mass, so that one part came below, and the other part above, the empty space he created. This space between the waters he called

Heaven. The heaven was made on the second day of world's existence.—After this, the Mosaical God soliloquised in these terms : “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear,” (the dry land seems to have been the bottom of the great water-mass), and behold, scarcely the soliloquy was ended or it was so. This event came to pass on the third day. And God called the dry land ‘earth,’ and the gathering of the water he called ‘sea’; and he saw that it was good.—We are glad to learn that the Mosaical God was satisfied with his day's work ; it appears, however, that he, or perhaps some other God, has afterwards not been so well satisfied with it, and has made great alterations ; for, at least now-a-days, the space above us is no more limited with water, but is an unlimited, an eternal space. And the earth now-a-days is nothing more but a small globe, of which same kind there exist an infinite number more in the universe. The earth on that account would not be sufficiently large to form the bottom of the infinitely large water-mass which Moses proposes to have existed. (It is obvious that Moses participated in the opinion of some of the ancients that the azure skies, which we see above us, were a large sea of water, which they fancied to be there, and thought supported by an arched vault.) — The Mosaical God began soon to feel a great affection for our earth, for behold, the next day after the creation of the empty space called heaven, he said : “let there be light in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth,” and he made two great lights, the greater one to rule the day, the lesser one to rule the night, and besides these, he made the stars and placed them all in the firmament of heaven. These things he made on the fourth day.—Thus we become aware how dear our little earth was to the great Mosaical God, for while he used but one day to make all the countless millions of celestial globes (of which many a one is hundreds of times larger than the earth,) he used several days to accomplish the creation of what concerns our earth alone. Besides, all these countless millions of globes were merely made to furnish to the inhabitants of the earth a pleasant sight during the night. How infinitely good was the great wonder-God of Moses ! Being already informed, however, that the light was created on the *first* day, we cannot help avowing our surprise at learning now, that the sun and moon and stars were made on the *fourth* day, as this appears to be somewhat incongruent, and shows that there is a mistake somewhere.—The Mosaical God, after having made the above-mentioned globes, took a fancy to stocking the waters with moving things that hath life, as also, to stock the firmament of heaven with fowls that fly. Consequently he created the great whale and every kind of creature that moveth in the waters, and every winged fowl that fly after his kind, and he saw that it was good, and blessed them.—The first fowls, it seems, have been flying as high as the stars since they were both placed in the firmament of heaven.—This creation happened on the fifth day. And on the sixth day God said : let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things, and beast, and it was so. And God saw it was good. Then he said : let us make man in our image, after our like-

ness (*our* would show there was a plurality of Gods), and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and desired them to multiply. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good. And it had been evening and morning of the sixth day.—We are happy to learn that the Mosaical God, on beholding the male and female that he had made, found everything to be very good, for it would have been rather unpleasant, if after many days of hard work, he should have discovered that his master-piece for whose benefit he made all the rest, had proved a failure. But how should creatures that were made after the very image of the Gods, not be very good—they could not be otherwise.

Reading this account of the creation we at first wonder what might have suggested to this wonderful God the idea of creating an earth, and creatures, and how he, after having passed so long a time in idleness, at once became so diligent and full of luminous thoughts; but now, since we are informed that he himself also, has the external appearance of a human being, and thus is a sort of human being, now we do not wonder any longer; for, to a being of this kind, the dry land is much more preferable to walk on than the waters. And he, once having created the earth, will, of course, have felt the want of company, and thus have conceived the idea of forming many creatures, even at last of forming some after his own likeness. Man, now knowing that he is so very much alike the God, creator of all things, has indeed good reason to pride himself and to be vain, and no wonder if he believes that everything existing in nature was only made for his pleasure or benefit. The Bible teaches him to think so.

CHAPTER II.—From the former pages we learned in what manner the Mosaical God made heaven and earth, and all it contains, in six days. This must have been fatiguing work, especially for one not accustomed to do much. Also we read: And God rested on the seventh day from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because he had rested.—This blessing and sanctifying of the day shows that he must have been tired out and felt grateful for the rest he enjoyed. Yet to bless a day is rather ridiculous, since a day once passed away never comes back and accordingly has no benefit of the blessing, but what matters it, it still shows the grateful disposition of the Mosaical God. If people, on account of this blessing, also sanctify the seventh day, they would do well to remember that it is never the same day, though they may give it the same name. If the Mosaical God did not think of that, it was probably because the pleasure of having rested so well brought him in ecstasy, and gave him no time to think upon what he said.—Thus having rested to his satisfaction, God commenced again to work. This time he caused a mist to go up from the

earth moistening, the face of the earth ; then taking of the dust of the ground, he moulded out of it the figure of a man. The figure being formed, he blew into its nostrils, and lo, it began to live ; thus the first man was made, and he called his name Adam.—Those among the learned folks, who say that one is astonished, when engaged in the study of anatomy, at the wisdom wherewith the human body is inwardly constructed, may see here how they are mistaken, for man was kneaded out of moistened earth in the same manner as an earthen pot is kneaded by the potter ; this teaches us the Bible.—When now the man Adam had lived for some time alone (and it must have been a considerable long time, for in the mean while he had given names to all the living creatures of the earth, which certainly is not the work of a day,) the Mosaical God suddenly discovered that the man needed a companion. In consequence of this discovery, he caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam ; then, while he was in a state of unconsciousness, he extracted one of his ribs and closed the hole with a lump of flesh. Thereupon he metamorphised the rib into a woman and presented her to Adam.—By this remarkable story we learn in what manner man and woman came into existence, and, seeing that nobody else has told us so much as Moses does, we may deem ourselves happy with his disclosures. One thing only is rather to the prejudice of the story, namely that there was already related that male and female were created on the sixth day. Now, not only the male is formed for a second time on the eighth day, but the woman yet several days later. Such inconsistency proves not much for the truth of a story. It is true, we may suppose the first male and female to have been an hermaphrodite, and that the Mosaical God made afterwards two beings of this one, but such explanation atones not for making over the man also a second time ; therefore Moses must have been mistaken while telling this story.—Adam on awaking of his deep sleep, was not a little surprised on beholding the beautiful present God had got up for him ; he uttered his surprise and joy in quite poetical terms, declaring his opinion that man ought to leave his father and his mother and adhere unto his wife.—Thus we see how the transport of joy made him speak poetically, even get prophetic visions, for how, without such, could he have known what a father and mother was ; and we see, he perceived at once that such would be the consequence of his getting a wife. For the rest it was lucky for Adam that his prophetic views went not too far, for else his mirth would have been tempered in a great measure by knowing that the beautiful present God brought him was a deceitful one.—And, says Moses, they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.—How happy these two must have been to feel no constraint of misplaced shame !

The place of residence of Adam, and Eve, his wife, was a splendid garden ; it was called Eden. After the description given of it, it must have been a very extensive garden, since it contained some of the largest rivers of the globe within its limits. And it must also have been a very desirable garden, for Moses says (v. 11-12) there was gold in the garden, and the gold of that land was good.—Whether Adam and Eve may have appreciated the value of it, we do not know,

but should have deemed it of very little benefit to them. Yet of still less benefit to them was a tree planted by God in the midst of the garden, called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and whose fruit God had forbidden Adam (while he was yet alone) to eat of; for, said God, the day he should eat thereof, he should surely die.

CHAPTER III.—By this chapter we are informed that the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals, and beguiled the woman by telling her that she, by eating of the forbidden fruit, would become alike to God.—The serpent, however, did not believe this himself, for in such case he, also, would have eaten of that miraculous fruit.—Eve, not in the least astonished of hearing a serpent talk (wherefrom it appears that it was a common thing of hearing serpents speak in those days), picked the nice looking fruit, still having some slight misgivings about it. She also brought some of it to Adam, who, forgetting the injunction concerning it, ate it on the spot. Now it happened a few moments later that the Lord-god, while taking a walk in the garden, unfortunately called for Adam, and he, (although having partaken of the fruit of knowledge,) possessed not knowledge enough to keep countenance, and betrayed himself at once, laying the fault upon his wife. His wife again laid the fault upon the serpent. The Mosaic God grew very angry when discovering that mankind was not so very good (as he at first appears to have believed, in Chapter I: 31); he, consequently, began by cursing the serpent, informing him that henceforth he should crawl upon his belly and eat the dust. (Which means he should lose his legs. Besides the legs, the Lord-god has apparently also taken away his voice, or perhaps the voice was lost by eating the dust.) And the seed (the descendants) of the woman should crush the head of his seed (his descendants), while he should only be able to crush the heels of hers.—This saying plainly points to the creeping condition of the serpent, compared with the upright walking condition of man, which makes that while the latter can tread the serpent upon the head the other can only bite him on the heels. The Christians, however, have always been very fond of searching for suitable prophecies upon their Christ, and they accordingly have deemed it proper to declare, that the serpent was nobody less than Satan in person, and that the expression "seed of the woman," means nobody else than Jesus of Nazareth. But taking in consideration that everywhere in the Bible the word "seed" is used with the meaning of "descendants," we should think it ought to be here also understood in the same sense. Now the serpent have progeny, but Satan not, at least, we never heard of his wife and children; would it not, therefore, be more reasonable to believe that Moses meant a real serpent, but not Satan? Much more so, since he told us that the creeping things were made, but never told us that Satan was created. Then, "the seed of Eve," why should this only allude to the fisherman of Nazareth, while Eve (according to common belief) was the mother of all the thousands of millions of mankind that have lived since the creation; with what right, then, should we pick out

only one of them, and say that he alone was meant by the "seed?" Indeed, the Christians are greatly mistaken when they pretend to see here a prophecy; as a proof of it, we shall only observe this: if we were to take the words as a prophecy explained in the Christian way, it was to convey the meaning that Jesus should crush Satan's power. But what does Jesus say himself? that the majority of mankind choose the broad road that leads to hell, while only few choose the narrow path that leads to heaven. The power of Satan is thus, according to his own declaration, a good deal greater than his, so that the assertion of the Christians that Jesus of Nazareth was to crush Satan's head proves to be entirely groundless. Moses also did not look upon the serpent in such a melancholy way as the Christians do, for do we not later see that he ordained the Israelites in the wilderness to reverence a fiery serpent? This, of course, he would not have done if Satan also had assumed that shape.

We may peruse all the books of Moses, but nowhere can we find the least indication of his having thought of the existence of such a creature as a Devil. And furthermore, how wicked would have been the Mosaical God if he had placed his two inexperienced human beings in the same garden with a Devil! We cannot admit of such a straight act of wickedness in that great God of Moses, who proved to be so exceedingly good, according to the Bible, as to make all the creation only for the benefit or pleasure of man. Would then so good a God have been able to treat his first creatures in such a malicious and treacherous manner as the Christians choose to explain? No, we never can believe it; we much more prefer to believe that the Mosaical God had never foreseen that the serpent would amuse himself with beguiling the woman. This, also, was such an uncommonly bold trick and ill-chosen joke, that no one with human feelings and perceptions would ever have anticipated it. Even the fact of God's forbidding Adam to eat of the fruit is in itself a proof of his ignorance of the future, for if knowing it, he would have known beforehand that Adam should sin, and would not have had any occasion to make experiments on that score.

The Mosaical God proceeded with meting out his punishments. The woman got now the worse of it, for it seems that the God of Moses, entirely forgetting he never prohibited the woman to eat of the fruit, was in no mood to listen to reason. He said he should henceforth multiply her pain; in pain should she bring forth children, and for her husband should be her desire, while he should rule over her.—This punishment was severe indeed, but if we look about us in nature we perceive that all female creatures, of what kind it may be, bring forth their young in pain. This is a circumstance common to all, and it seems to be a property which of necessity belongs to animal life. The woman, therefore cannot be said to have received a separate punishment, since there partake of it all earthly creatures of her sex, and she would have experienced the same whether the Mosaical God had cursed her or not. Then, what concerns the desire for the opposite sex, this exists as well with the man as with the woman, so that the God of Moses did not need name it as a punishment for her only, since it is as much a punishment for him. And as to the woman being

ruled by the man, this, in the first place, is not fully so, since the way of living of human society, we mean the customs of a country, depends as much on the women, as on the men, so that indirectly man is also ruled by woman. Man, however, is apparently the master, but the same is the case almost in the whole series of animal creatures; everywhere we see the male leading the female; and this originates from their greater strength, and daring. The woman accordingly received, even in this respect, no separate punishment, but one common to all creatures of her sex.

The man, for his punishment, should eat his bread in the sweat of his face, till he returned unto the dust, for dust he was and unto dust he should return.—The Mosaical God seemed to have forgotten that he, some time past, had said unto Adam, the day he should eat of the fruit he should die. Now, however, he allows him to live, (that he might eat bread soaked with sweat) yet for a space of 930 years. The God of Moses thus appears to have a rather changeable mind, which is not much god like. And what concerns the eating of his bread in the sweat of his face, which probably signifies that man should have to work in order to get his living, this man has to do, we cannot deny it, but what is the cause of it? It is because the races of white men have quitted the original soil where the human races originated from. The whole appearance and structure of man shows that they must have had their origin in some hot clime, where no covering was required, and where wild fruits grew sufficiently, without culture, to feed them, while they were uncivilized. They once getting more civilized, preferred colder climes, and preferred to settle in countries where they had to spin, and to weave cloth, and where they had to till the ground in order to raise fruits, to the hot clime where mankind was born. Hence, they have to work for a living; it was their own choice, but it was not on account of the curse of Moses's God. If the white man chose to live in Central Africa, he would have to work as little as the beasts of the field; he could gather his food in the cool hours of the day, and rest himself for the rest of the time.

That man should return to the dust, is a punishment of which woman is not exempt; the Mosaical God seems not to have reflected thereon; besides man and woman, all other earthly creatures die also, not only the animals, but even the trees, yea, everything which has life. This proves that it is a necessary property of living organism, that the material form, when it gets old or unfit for life, should decay, so that its substance may serve again for the construction of other forms. Man, therefore, in dying, only follows an inevitable law of nature, and he would have died, even had the God of Moses never cursed the man Adam.—When reading this chapter, we should at first have thought that the cursings of the Mosaical God were only designed for Adam and Eve, as they were the sinning party, but by a further perusal of the Biblical books, we soon discover that the cursings of this wonderful God of infinite goodness were intended for the whole human race, that is, for all the expected descendants of these two unlucky individuals. By this we perceive what a queer notion of justice the great God of Moses must have had; because Adam and Eve sinned,

without knowing what was right or what was wrong, he not only was not satisfied with punishing them in a frightful manner (much more than he had threatened to do), but also made the curse of the punishment extend to the whole of their descendants, to thousands of millions of individuals, who could not help, by any means, what father Adam or mother Eve had done. We see from this how vindictive the Mosaical God was, and what an exceedingly wrong idea of righteousness he had; indeed, he proved to be as whimsical, tyrannical a fool as only the perverted imagination of a man can bring forth.

This caricature of a God, sometimes called in the Bible the merciful and gracious God, not yet satisfied with the punishment dealt out, would have some more of it, namely, he would not allow Adam and Eve to stay in the beautiful garden, but chose to drive them out; as he said, lest they should eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and live forever.—The fruit of this tree seems to have been an antidote for the deadly fruit of the other tree. That the Mosaical God would not allow Adam and Eve to eat thereof cannot be taken amiss, for, he having once cursed them, had, of course, to keep his word, and prevent everything that should interfere with its fulfilment; but he needed not on that account to drive them out, since he, as a mighty God, could easily have destroyed the tree, and burnt all its wood and branches and fruits to ashes. The Mosaical God preferred, however, to chase Adam and Eve from the garden; such we must allow, may have been good sport, a sport worthy of a Lord, in particular of a Lord who has rested many days of his work and has no better occupation on his hands.—Before chasing Adam and Eve, we discover that he made them coats of skins and clothed them.—For the Mosaical God seems to have gotten a delicate feeling for decency.

CHAPTER IV.—In this chapter Moses tells us that Adam knew Eve, and this circumstance had the happy result, that Eve conceived and was delivered of son; and she said: I have gotten a man from the Lord.—That Eve must have been surprised by seeing the little fellow, we may easily imagine, but how she came to the idea of calling the great God of Moses a Lord, is not so easily to be understood; for Eve, by seeing so many surprising proofs of his Almightiness, should have understood that he was a God and not a man, and that a human title was a very unfit one for such a superior being, since a human title carries with it the idea of a human individual.—The first son of Eve was called Cain, and Eve conceived again and bore his brother Able. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And it happened that Cain and Abel brought offerings unto the Lord. Cain brought fruits of the ground, but Abel brought of his flock and the fat thereof; with this offering the Lord was pleased, but not with that of Cain. This token of partiality excited Cain's anger, and the consequence was that Cain slew his brother when they were in the field. Shortly after the murder had taken place, Cain chanced to meet the Lord on his way. The Lord asked him where his brother was, where-

upon Cain said that he was not his brother's keeper. The Lord, though, was not so easily to be deceived, for he at once perceived what was the matter, and therefore cursed Cain, announcing to him that he, for the future, should be a vagabond on earth. Cain showed some repentance, saying he knew that now he had to fly from the presence of the Lord, anybody he would fall in with would slay him. The Lord, for this time, less angry with Cain, the fratricide, than in former days with his parents, the fruit-eaters, gave him a mark, that whoever might meet him should *not* slay him.—This, indeed, was very kind of the Lord, but if the Lord only had remembered that there existed nobody to slay Cain, then he would have understood that the mark was quite an unnecessary thing. Thus the Mosaical God, as we discover, was of a pretty weak memory—but as it is known that lack of memory is often the share of the most genial minds, let us not conceive too low an opinion of him. Or, it may be that his memory was a good one, and that there existed yet other men, but created by other Gods, as according to v. 22 of this chapter, there was a plurality of Gods.

Cain now started for another country out of the sight of the Lord. It appears the God of Moses could only overlook a part of the earth; probably he dwelled in that time on earth himself, for if he had dwelled above, as he did in later days, then he would have been able to overlook the whole earth, in proportion as she was turning.—The country where Cain settled was the land of Nod; arrived there, he took his wife to him, and she conceived, and was delivered of a son, called Enoch.—From whence Cain had gotten a wife, Moses does not say, but we may presume that the Lord god has built her out of one of Cain's ribs, before he started off, so as to cause him not to be alone. Some people think that Cain should have taken a sister of his for a wife, but how can they suppose that such a criminal marriage would have been permitted by the great God of Moses; besides, there were no sisters, since Adam and Eve begot only sons.—Moses gives us further the names and occupation of some of Cain's descendants, and we see therefrom that some of them were famous men, wherefore we advise any one to read it.—Adam, in the mean-while, knew his wife again, and she bare a son, and the name given him was Seth, because he was another seed instead of Abel. And Seth begat a son, called Enos, and at that time men began to call upon the name of the "Lord."—Probably the Lord himself had removed without their sight, so that they henceforth had to be contented with calling upon a name, instead of a reality.

CHAPTER V.—From this chapter we learn the pedigree of Adam up to Noah. Although Moses forgets to give the names of the females, which is usually required in a pedigree, still, it is not void of interest, as we are informed thereby to what a fabulous old age the men of those times used to reach. Adam, for instance, died 930 years old. Seth 912 years. Enos 905 years. Kainan 910, Mahala-

beel 895, Fared 800, and Methuselah even reached the blessed age of almost 1000 years. Besides being informed how old they grew, we learn also to what age they retained the capacity of procreating children, for Noah, for instance, was not less than 500 years old when he became the father of three boys, known in history as Shem, Ham, and Japheth.—Some have pretended that the years Moses speaks of should be no years of twelve months; by looking over Chapt. VII. and VIII., where he gives the duration of the deluge, one may, however, ascertain that Moses, in fact, reckons by years of twelve months.—Yet we learn from this chapter that Enoch was taken away by God; but as every one will be taken away some time or the other, we see no miracle in this. If though, the Mosaic God should have taken him alive and carried him above the clouds, we fear that Enoch will have felt rather uncomfortable, and soon have died from cold and want of food.

CHAPTER VI.—And it came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took to themselves wives of all whom they chose—(v. 1, 2). There were giants on the earth in those days, also after that, when the sons of God went in to the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men, which were of old men of renown (v. 4).—We perceive by this, that while mankind were fruitful and multiplying on earth, the Mosaic God, on his side, was not slow neither, in filling the earth with human beings. Who the mothers were of these sons of God, Moses does not say; we consequently do not know whether they all were virgins, neither do we know whether the assistance of the Holy Ghost was always required in matters of this kind. But when we recollect the words which the Mosaic God spake in Gen. I, 27, we are almost inclined to think that he was a hermaphroditical being, and thus it may be, that he, by lack of other occupation, passed away the time with procreating children by himself. The Christians, as we know, pretend that God has only *one* son, but here we discover how greatly they are mistaken, since he got a host of sons. Daughters he seems not to have dealt in.

The earth was now well stocked with human beings, and as it had been God's special desire that this should be (vide Gen. I, 28), we might have reasonably expected to find him in a jolly mood about it. This, however, was not the case, for we read (v. 6): and God was sorry of having made man, yea, it grieved him at his heart, for (v. 5) the wickedness of man was great and the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.—To hear such reports of man is indeed a pity, but at the same time we must acknowledge it to sound strange that such should have been the case, since we found in Chapt. I, 31, that God, after having made man, saw that all he had made was *very good*. It appears now that he had been mistaken, and no wonder thus he afterwards was sorry of having made man. What being with a human heart is not apt, sometimes, to make a blunder, of

which he has to repent afterwards, and why then should the great God of Moses not make some blunders also.

This great Lord conceived now a grand idea how to rid himself of all the creatures, namely, by setting the whole earth under water and thus drowning everything that had life. Only one man had the good fortune of finding grace in the Lord's eyes; the happy man was Noah, a man upright and perfect in his generations. Noah begat three sons; these also (probably on account of the good grace wherein their father stood), should, with him and with their wives, be spared from the general drowning. Noah, accordingly, was ordered to build a sort of ship, called ark, wherein he, with his whole family, should take refuge. He also should take with him a male and a female of every kind of living thing that is on earth, to be saved with him from the flood which God intended to cause.—The Lord, thus, intended to drown all men, and even his own sons, and the grandsons, the giants, who still were of old men of renown; really, the Lord proved to possess no tender father heart; and when we consider thereby that he also was drowning so many thousands of babies who never did any wrong, and besides drowned so many millions of other creatures, animals who were innocent and who rejoiced in life, then, indeed, we exclaim, the God of Moses proved to possess no heart at all. How, now, can Moses say that it grieved God at his heart to have made man, while he had no heart at all. Such a story Moses could only tell by telling a big lie. Yet, the Lord had no right to make himself so angry with men, for if he had *not* made them *very good*, it was a fault of his, not theirs.

CHAPTER VII.—Although the Lord had ordained Noah to take one male and one female of every kind of living thing that is on earth, he, this time, ordained to do so with the unclean beasts only, but of all the clean beasts Noah should take seven pair instead of one.—Now that the ark was built, the Lord seems to have supposed there was room enough for more than one pair of each kind, and hence he may have ordained to take so many more. The ark according to the preceding chapter, was three hundred cubits (450 feet) in length fifty cubits (75 feet) in width, and thirty cubits (45 feet) in height. Although now this may be a tolerably large ship, it would, nevertheless, not be large enough to contain of all kinds of earthly creatures one pair, much less seven. If the God of Moses ordered such a thing, he clearly proved himself to be utterly ignorant of the infinite variety of creatures that exist on earth; nobody yet has been able to enumerate them all, and perhaps nobody ever will, for new species are discovered every year. We do not speak of the thousands of species of quadrupeds only, but also of the birds and insects, whose number seem to have no limit; so that a fleet of arks would have been required to hold them all. We must also keep in mind that one cannot stow away living creatures in the same manner as merchandise, since every one of them ought to have a place to move and to breathe. To see how much room every animal requires it is only necessary to enter a well organized cow-house, or horse-stable, and one will soon

perceive that the above-mentioned ship would scarcely have been sufficient for the domestic animals and for those that live in the neighborhood of man, not to mention the others. Furthermore, the food necessary to keep this whole host of living creatures alive during the period of a year (the deluge lasted a year, see Chapt. VIII), would have required an immense additional space, a space still larger than that which the animals themselves required. However this may be, Noah did as God had ordered him, we therefore hope for his sake, that the Lord presented him from the start with a well-filled purse, so as to enable him to buy all the provender necessary for the many creatures he had to take care of. We also hope, for his sake, that he and his sons were mighty good hunters and expert trappers, so that they may not have had too much trouble in catching all the game they wanted. They must still have had hard work enough, and it would not have been well if they should have been too tired out when entering the ark, since they will have been allowed no rest even there, as it requires the day-work of many men to feed and water so many animals, and clean all the cages, and keep order among the peace-disturbers. They truly must have eaten their bread in the sweat of their faces, and have gotten no rest, neither day nor night.—When they all were in the ark, the Lord himself locked the door; and it came to pass in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventh day of the month, that on this same day, all the fountains of the great deep opened, and the windows of heaven were unclosed, and the rain fell upon the earth, for forty days and forty nights (v. 11, 12).—We discover from this that in those times raining was caused by opening windows in heaven—namely, the blue sky we see above us, was, according to the ancients, an arched roof of crystal, and after the opinion of Moses, (see Gen. I.) there was above this roof nothing but water; now by opening windows (or sky-lights) in the roof the water poured down and came as rain on the earth. This time the Lord opened the door-traps to their full width, and let down an uncommonly large quantity of heavenly water; besides that, there were opened mysterious fountains of the sea, and the water spouted from the sea upon the land.—And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth, so that all the high mountains that were under the heavens were covered with water, even fifteen cubits above the mountains did the water rise. And all flesh perished that moveth upon the earth, and all creeping thing that creepeth, and those in whose nostrils was the breath of life that were on the dry land, died all; only Noah and those who with him were saved in the ark.—That this story of the holy scriptures is contrary to all what the modern sciences of astronomy and geology teach, is scarcely necessary to mention, since every one must see the absurdity of the notions of a heaven, etc., as Moses entertained, and whereupon he had based this tale. Nobody in the present age can be so simple-minded as to believe in good faith that the whole earth could be submerged till the water stood 15 cubits ($22\frac{1}{2}$ feet) above the highest mountain. To make the water rise $22\frac{1}{2}$ feet above the Chimborazo and other high mountains, and that over the whole earth, would require not less than four or five times as much water as exists on the globe. Whence

would that mass of waters have come from, since we know that there exists no sea above, and the waters that are in the sea below could not have left their place, because the deep must be filled; if spouted on the land it immediately would have returned into the deep. This account therefore is a great absurdity in itself, probably an invention of Moses, based upon an old legend (still existing in the north-eastern part of Africa) of a great inundation. Now, an inundation may have occurred over the whole land of Egypt in some remote period, but an inundation over the whole globe is an utter impossibility, since, as we said, the required quantity of water does not exist.

CHAPTER VIII.—Here we are informed that after a hundred and fifty days, the windows of heaven and the fountains of the deep were shut again, and on the 17th of the 7th month the ark grounded upon the mountain of Ararat. In the 10th month the tops of the mountains became visible again; and in the 12th month (thus in two months more) the face of the earth was dry.—Considering the extent of the water-splash, we must allow that the draining of it went on surprisingly quick.—By this time Noah took off the roof of the ark to discover how things looked outside and he saw that the surface was dry.—It was fortunate that all the fowls and little birds after their kind, did not take a fly while the covering was removed.—And it happened, one of those days, when Noah was on the Ararat, that he opened a window of the ark, and sent forth a raven, and the raven flew to and fro until the earth was dry. After a week he sent forth a dove, but she came back, for there was no resting place for the sole of her foot (as if the tops of the mountains were not sufficient for it.) After a week he sent her forth once more, and behold the dove came back with an olive leaf in her mouth; now Noah knew the waters had receded from the earth.—We discover how wonderfully quick olive trees grew up in that land; where a week previous the dove could find no resting place, now the olive trees had got already leaves.—And as the water was perfectly dried up, God spake unto Noah and ordered him to go forth from the ark with his wife, and his sons and their wives, and every living thing that was with them.—Since the Lord was not drowned with all the other beings in whose nostrils was the breath of life, we are left to suppose that he may have placed himself on the roof of the ark; also, from there he could hold conversation with the chosen man Noah.

Noah finding himself delivered from his prison, felt so thankful that he immediately built an altar unto the Lord, and offered thereon of every clean cattle and of every clean fowl. The Lord smelled the sweet savor, and said in his heart, I will not again curse the soil of the earth for man's sake, for the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth (v. 21).—A year previously God destroyed mankind on account of their wickedness, but this time, as we see, he had altered his mind, and would no more destroy man because of his wickedness; probably he had come to the conclusion that it was of no use to take such pains

since man was not to be corrected ; consequently he thought the wisest that he could do was to make the best of it by enjoying the smell of the sweet savor of their offerings. His opinion that the imagination of man's heart was evil from his youth, was, for the rest, not very flattering for the chosen man Noah and his family, as now they were the only scions of mankind he could be speaking of.

CHAPTER IX.—The Lord blessed Noah and his sons that they should multiply and repopulate the earth. And he appointed them rulers of all the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven and the fishes of the sea ; he also gave them leave to eat every moving thing that hath life, and every green herb, but the blood they should not eat, for the blood was the life, and the Lord should ask their blood in case they should eat it.—The doctrine that the blood is the life is rather a peculiar one, for in that case we lose a part of our life by every bleeding ; and strange to say, most people lose their life without yet having lost their blood ; how the Mosaical God accounts for that we cannot explain. That the Lord allowed man to eat of every living thing and every herb, was very kind ; unfortunately, however, many of these won't agree with the human stomach, and would poison him at a short moment's notice.—The Lord continued in proving his kindly feelings by making a covenant with Noah, that he henceforth never again should destroy the earth by a flood, and by the way of a token, he set his bow in the clouds, namely, the rainbow.—It seems that the God of Moses knew not that the rainbow is nothing else but a consequence of the reverberation of the sunbeams against falling waterdrops, so that (supposing that a flood had taken place), even before the flood the rainbow would have been visible now and then ; this token, therefore, cannot have surprised Noah very much.—Further, we are informed of what passed during the last years, that is, the last three centuries of Noah's life. He then busied himself with cultivating the grape vine, and with making wine, and sometimes partook freely of it. Once upon a day he got so exceedingly intoxicated that he stripped off all his garments in the midst of his tent. His youngest son Ham chancing to come into the tent, seems to have been surprised at seeing the old gentlemen in such a state, for he immediately withdrew and told the circumstance to his brothers. His brothers now went out and taking a cloth, they covered their father, going backwards, even without looking at him. When Noah had slept himself sober, he discovered by some means or other that Ham had been talking of him, and upon that, got in a rage. He therefore cursed, not Ham himself, but Canaan, the son of Ham, who of course, could not help that his father was a tale-teller.—Though Noah acted entirely wrong by cursing the unfortunate Canaan, and had better cursed his own self, still the Mosaical God sided with him, for the descendants of Canaan, the Canaanites, have, on account of Noah's curse, always been hated by the Lord, (who wished nothing more than to see them either subdued or exterminated by the Israelites).—Some Bible friends have said that the negroes were the descendants of Ham, but they are wrong, since Canaan, the cursed son of Ham, was the sire

of the Canaanites—see next chapter. They also have said that Noah was the first vine-planter, and knew not the strength of the wine. This is likewise an arbitrary explanation, for nothing proves such assertion, while the manner in which his sons considered the state wherein he was, would prove that they knew by experience what drunkenness was.

CHAPTER X.—This chapter tells us of the descendants of the sons of Noah. However, as nobody cares much about Ashkenar, or Riphath, or Thogaz, nor about Ludin, Anamim, Lehabim or Naphchuchim, etc., we shall not waste time with them. It needs only to be noticed that from v. 14–19, it clearly appears that Janaan, the cursed grandson of Noah, was the sire of the Jebusites, and the Emorites, and Hinites, and the other Canaanite tribes, who dwelled in Canaan,—and against whom Moses led his people, telling them that it was the desire of God that they should occupy the land and make the inhabitants their slaves, or slay them; but about this we shall see by and by.

CHAPTER XI.—Here Moses communicates to us, that while the human population was yet one nation, the Lord, upon a day, came down from heaven to see what mankind were doing here below. He then discovered they were busy with building a very high tower which was intended to serve as a beacon so that they might always be sure to find the centre of their common place of habitation. The Lord discovered, also, that mankind were all one people, and spoke all one language.—Considering this in a human way, one would have thought it to be commendable, but the great God of Moses took a different view of it, and was annoyed at the unity he saw among mankind. Consequently he confounded their language so that they did no longer understand each other, and were obliged to put a stop to the erection of their city and tower.—It is easily to perceive that this somewhat queer proceeding of the Mosaical God must have caused great confusion among the peaceful people. Many a one may have gone crazy for life-time in consequence of it, but what did the Lord care for that? He ascended again to heaven, and let the unfortunate people shift for themselves to get out of the confusion as best they could.

We learn from this account that the Bible-god is not a God of peace, as they sometimes do tell us, for he disliked peace and preferred to see confusion and disunion; we see, furthermore, that he had now chosen his domicile in heaven, but sitting there pretty high, was not able to see what was going on upon the earth, and is obliged to come down when he wishes to know exactly all about it. The Bible-god is, accordingly, neither omnipresent, nor all-knowing.

CHAPTER XII.—Terah, the father of Abram, was a descendant of Shem; he left the land Us, where he had been residing, and intended to proceed towards

the land of Canaan, to settle there. He came as far as the land of Haran, and there he died. Abram, his son, received now the order of God to continue the journey, and to settle in the land which the Lord himself would show him. At the same time the Lord told him that he gave him that land as an inheritance for himself and his descendants, and he added the promise that he would make them there to become a great nation and a blessing to the other nations of the earth. (See about this, our observation in Chapt. XXII.)—We perceive here that the Mosaical God took suddenly a great fancy to Abram without any reasonable cause. Abram himself must certainly have been very much surprised at the sudden fondness of the Lord; for seeing God, in *propria persona*, coming down from heaven only to bless a man, must be a surprising sight indeed. It is a fact that the hoped for descendants of Abram never became a great nation, nor were they ever in full possession of the promised land; but what matters this, since Abram will have been satisfied with the promise, and have rejoiced therein.

Abram, when arrived in Canaan with Sarai, his wife (who was barren, according to the previous chapter), was soon obliged to leave the country again on account of famine. He then went to Egypt in order to buy the victuals necessary, and took along with him Sarai, his wife; but, being somewhat afraid that the king of Egypt, called Pharaoh, should fall in love with her, and kill him, he prudently advised her to give out that she were his sister. And behold it actually happened that the princes of Pharaoh's house, on seeing her, hit upon the idea of bringing her before their king, who, on the first sight, fell in love with her, and kept her in his house as a concubine. Abram, the favorite of God, did not oppose this course of circumstances; also, he was treated well for Sarai's sake, and received many rich gifts, which he readily accepted. The Lord-god, however, deemed it not good that Abram should be alone, and consequently sent great plagues into Pharaoh's house, and he plagued Pharaoh, because of Sarai, Abram's wife. Pharaoh, who seemed to be a man of great perception, understood at once the reason of all these plagues, and thus gave Sarai back unto Abram, ordering him to leave the country. Abram left, taking with him the gifts he had obtained in such a clever though not very respectable manner.

CHAPTER XIII.—Abram, loaded with his riches, went on his way home, going southwards.—According to the new geography, Canaan is situated northwards.—Arrived there, the Lord once more promised Abram that land as an inheritance forever, and moreover, promised him a progeny as numerous as the dust of the earth (v. 14–19).—This promise was probably a token of approval of the Lord for the smartness Abram had shown while in Egypt. The promise, however, has never been fulfilled, since the descendants of Abram have not, forever, possessed the desirable land of promise, nor have they become as numerous as the dust of the earth. A thimble-full of dust would, probably, contain a larger number of dust atoms than all the Israelites, who have existed and may yet exist, will ever number as long as the world shall stand.

CHAPTER XIV.—In this chapter Moses tells us about the many kings who lived in the neighborhood of Abram, and who spent the time in making plundering excursions. Once they made a descent upon Lot, the nephew of Abram, who lived not far off; they made him prisoner, and took away all he got. Abram being informed of this circumstance, marched out with an army of drilled servants, 318 men, and pursued the enemy; he smote them, and defeated them entirely. When Abram had performed this feat, two kings from the neighborhood called upon him to congratulate him. One of them was Melchisedek, who not only was a king, but also a priest of the most high God. And he blessed Abram and gave him the tithes of all he possessed.—In accordance with the common belief, people do think that God selected Abram in order to make himself known to him and his descendants, that they should adore him; now, however, we see that he got yet other persons who adored him; which shows that people are mistaken in their supposition, and that the fancy God took for Abram was not for that reason, but from pure friendship.

CHAPTER XV.—After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying; “Fear not, Abram, for I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” And Abram said: “Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus.”—What the steward had to do with the affair we do not comprehend; it seems Abram meant that if he had another steward, one of his own creed, he would not object to have a son of the steward as his. It was very unpleasant, too, for a man as Abram, who expected to get a progeny as numerous as the dust atoms of the earth, to possess not even one child.—The Lord seemed to feel for him, for he took him out of doors, and said: “Look, now, towards heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: So shall thy seed be.”—We fear Abram has not been able to number them, for his seed never has been as numerous. The number of stars is supposed to be infinite, because they are dispersed in an eternal space; that the number of the promised descendants of Abram has never been as large we need not mention, since any one can easily perceive that if such had been the case there would be no room sufficient on earth to hold, much less to support, them all. But seeing that Abram cannot have had an idea of the countless number of the stars, we can acquiesce with the supposition that the false promise he got, will, at least, have had the good effect of cheering him up, and in so far we admire the kindness of the Lord to take the trouble of telling a story.—Besides that exceedingly large number of posterity, the Lord also promised him the land, where Abram was for the present, together with all the countries situated between the river of Egypt (the Nile) and the great river Euphrates (v. 18); it was now inhabited by the Kenites, and the Kenisites, and Kadmonites, and Canaanites, etc., but it would become an inheritance forever unto Abram and his seed.—That this promise was as false as the former one, is easily perceived, for the so-called descendants of Abram never have had, in undivided possession, any more land

than the little county of Judea, which, compared to what the Lord promised, is as a drop to a brim-full glass. And yet that little which they have possessed was their own but for a little while, history shows that they have almost always been subjected to other nations, and have not been free for three hundred years, taking it altogether.

CHAPTER XVI.—Here we are informed that Sarai, in a moment of depressed spirits on account of her being barren, advised her husband to procreate an heir by her handmaid. Abram now (though told by the Lord that he would get lawful offspring), did not object to the proposition of Sarai, and readily complied with her wishes. The consequence was that Hagar, the handmaid, was soon in the family way. And the consequence of this again was that Hagar grew impudent towards her mistress, who being not willing to bear with her assumptions, sent her away. Hagar, thereupon, went into the wilderness and roved about; but it happened one day that she met by chance with an angel of the Lord near by a fountain, and the angel talked to her so persuasively that he made her return to Sarai and be more civil.—This history shows that, in that period of world's existence, the angels sometimes took a walk on the earth. It is a pity they do not do it now-a-days, for if they did, they would be of great usefulness to our housewives, by teaching submission to the servant maids.—Hagar when returned, was delivered of a son, and he was called by the name of Ishmael, as he should become, according to the promise of the angel, the stock of a countless great nation.

CHAPTER XVII.—When Abram reached the age of ninety-nine years, the Lord appeared unto him; and the Lord repeated with emphasis the same promise which he had made him already so many times, but now to prove the truth of what he said, he changed the name of Abram into Abraham, and the name of Sarai into Sarah; (which, of course, proved a great deal!) Also, the Lord was very anxious to make a covenant with Abraham to the effect that he should be, forever, a God unto him and his seed. As a testimony of the sincerity of this covenant, the Lord wished that all the male persons of Abraham's house, and every male child born afterwards, should be circumcised.—It was, truly, very flattering for Abraham that the Lord was so anxious to be a God for him and for his seed alone, and showed thereby no inclination to be a God for anybody else; but if we consider that the Lord was the one who proposed and made the covenant, we might reasonably expect that he himself should have given a testimony, since he had no right to ask that the second party to the bargain should give it, as this could not in the least insure the fulfilment of his agreement.—Abraham, however, had good faith in the Lord and was satisfied with the proposition; he got up and went immediately to work, first circumcising himself then Ishmael, and further, all other male persons of his house; he performed all within the very same day.—We already saw that the trained servants of Abraham's house amounted to 318 men (Chapt. XIV), and when we now take into

consideration that the number of untrained servants and of male children must have amounted to a still larger number, we may rest assured that Abraham must have had a hard day's work by circumcising so many adults, and young ones, all in one day. We candidly confess that he deserves our admiration by showing himself so active and smart in this new sort of religious occupation, which is the more surprising since he himself was an invalid that day by having just undergone the operation. Why, however, it should please the Lord to see his people circumcised, we cannot understand, since he himself had formed man as he was; for if he did not like to see the prepuce, why had he not formed man without it when moulding him out of clay. But again we discover, the Lord was changeable of mind; what at one time he considered to be done very well, he at another time wished to be made very differently.

CHAPTER XVIII. One day, when it was very hot weather, Abraham seated himself at the door of his tent, and lifting up his eyes he beheld three men passing by. One of these men was the Lord. Abraham no sooner saw him or ran out to meet him, and officiously invited the Lord to enter, for the purpose of refreshing himself with a foot-bath, and with a lunch, to be taken under the trees. The Lord accepted the kind offer. Abraham immediately ordered his wife to bake cakes, and his cook to dress a fat calf. Thereupon, taking cream and milk, he brought it up with the dressed calf and waited himself on his guests while they ate.—We see by this incident in Abraham's life, what a civil man he was, and also, we discover that the Lord, though being a God, did not despise the hearty dinner of a mortal. When in heaven, he got nothing more of it save the sweet flavor which rises with the smoke, so that it is no wonder he gladly accepted of the opportunity to enjoy for this once a little more.—While he and his companions were thus engaged in refreshing themselves, the Lord-god took occasion to inquire about Sarah, and at the same time intimated that in a year hence he would return to congratulate her with a son. Sarah overheard this, as she stood behind him in the door of the tent, and laughed, for she thought within herself, "Shall I yet have pleasure after I am waxed old, and my lord (husband) also being old." The Lord heard her laugh, and offended with this, asked why she laughed; but Sarah answered, "I laughed not." But the Lord said, "Nay, indeed, thou didst laugh." And the Lord and his companions rose up and went on their way.—By this interesting passage of the Biblical history, we again perceive that the Lord could tolerate more from Abraham than from anybody else; for in the preceding chapter, v. 17, we are told that when the Lord made the same prediction to Abraham some time ago, the latter one found the idea of a man of 100, and a woman of 90 years producing children, so ridiculous that he burst into a laughing fit until he fell on the ground; yet at this the Lord had not been offended at all.

Whilst then the Lord and his companions were on their way, the Lord felt undecided whether he should communicate the purpose of his journey to Abraham, who kept them company for some distance; but at last he concluded to

conceal nothing from his friend Abraham, and thus deliberately told him that his design was, to go to Sodom and Gomorrhah and to set those two cities on fire, as their sins were very grievous.—Why the Lord had not chosen the nearest road by coming down in a straight line from heaven upon those places, he does not explain.—Abraham, on receiving the intelligence, drew near to the Lord and asked whether he intended to destroy the righteous with the wicked? The Lord, after a long dispute with Abraham about the matter, finally declared that if there were only ten righteous he would spare the cities; but he knew there were not as many there, and not wishing to talk any longer about it, he turned away.—We see how wicked the inhabitants must have been if there existed even not ten righteous in the two cities. One would have expected there would have been at least a sufficient number of innocent little babes there, but it seems they got no babes in those places.

CHAPTER XIX.—This chapter paints to us in lively colors how exceedingly depraved the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrhah were. When reading it, one is no more surprised that the Lord deemed them worthy of being all burnt alive, for their wickedness surpassed all limits. They would commit no less a crime than perpetrating the most vile obscenity upon the persons of the two celestial messengers, those travelling companions of God, as soon as they arrived in Sodom. And every man of Sodom, both old and young, yea, all people from every quarter, was full of the same obscene lust. They surrounded the house of Lot, where the celestial beings had taken their lodging, and made a dreadful uproar, supposing they should in this way get them out of doors, but they came not out. Lot then, to appease the crowd, officiously offered them the free use of his daughters, but the offer was rejected, they desiring nothing else than the two celestials; and even made still more disturbance. This began at last to annoy the celestials, who therefore smote them with blindness, both small and great, so that they were in trouble how to find the door. Early on the next morning the celestials set the cities on fire.—Though this instructive and highly moral narrative ought to be regarded as historical truth, since it finds a place in the holy scriptures, still there is something rather suspicious looking in it; for instance, it looks strange that all men, both young and old, were every one of them so lively disposed that same night: still, it must be supposed that there were both some very old men and very young ones, of whom one would not have expected such wicked thoughts. Besides, it is remarkable that the chief passion of all those people should have been precisely a crime which is very much abhorred by almost every man, and which, moreover, is a physical impossibility for most of them. Yet Moses seems to think it edifying to represent a whole population as so fond of such an unnatural passion that he has evidently taken as a model the cupidity of a host of starving wolves after a prey which is beyond their reach; and he entirely loses out of view the fact that there is in man naturally implanted the desire for the opposite sex, and that it is too strong ever to cease to exist with a whole population. Moses also forgets to remember

that in every town there live women as well as men, so that if the males were all smitten with blindness because of their wickedness, and burnt alive, the females, at least, must have run out of the fire, since they were not blind. Seeing, thus, that Moses, here has made a great mistake, by entirely forgetting the existence of females, we cannot help thinking that the tale has very much the appearance not of historical truth, but of the nasty fiction of a coarse-minded clown.

Lot and his wife and daughters were led by the celestials out of the burning city, and when once on a safe road they were left with the recommendation not to look back. The wife of Lot, however, being endowed with her share of curiosity, had the imprudence of looking back; the consequence was that she was metamorphosed, on the spot, into a statute of salt.—This, surely was an efficient punishment, and we must allow that the Lord proved to be a very clever hand for inventing suitable punishments; yet how the posterity has ever come to the knowledge of this strange metamorphosis, we do not know, for so much is sure, that neither Lot nor his daughters can have seen anything of it, since they would have been metamorphosed themselves in case they had looked behind after Mrs. Lot. Or perhaps the old lady led the van, so that the family, seeing what had happened to her before their eyes, took a warning of it and did not look behind them.—We further learn something about the moral character of Lot's daughters. They were rescued from the fire, as we thought, for their righteousness and religiosity: still, the first thing we hear from them after their rescue, was to intoxicate their father, and then go to bed with him. The children of incest they thus engendered, became the stock of nations, which according to the views of the Mosaical God, must be a great blessing. Thus these daughters were blessed for their wickedness, while they would have deserved not less than their mother to have been changed into pillars of salt.

CHAPTER XX.—This time we see Abraham again on a journey. He took his wife with him, and though she was no more very young (being past 90 years), still he took the precaution of recommending her to tell the same lie, that she was his sister, from which he once already had derived palpable profits. The trick again succeeded perfectly well, for Abimelech, the king of the country, on seeing Sarah, got greatly fascinated, notwithstanding her age, and hearing that she was unmarried, took her into his house, paying Abraham a thousand silver pieces for her. Notwithstanding Abraham fared well by it, still it appears that the Lord-god did not like to see him separated from his wife; he therefore cunningly invented some ruse by which Abimelech would be induced to give up the woman, namely, he firmly closed up the womb of Sarah, and of every other woman of Abimelech's house (v. 18). This circumstance caused the king great uneasiness, and having dreamt for what reason he was thus treated by the Lord, he hastened to restore Sarah to Abraham, whom he moreover loaded with rich presents so as to appease the anger of the Lord.—Thus we see how profitable it was to be on good terms with the Mosaical God, as with his assistance every manner of making money succeeded admirably well.

CHAPTER XXI.—And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken, and Sarah conceived and bare a son unto Abraham in his old age, at the fixed time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of the son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac (v. 1-3).—We perceive now that the Lord kept his word with Sarah, doing unto her as he had spoken, and that she, with the aid of the Lord, actually bare a son unto Abraham notwithstanding his old age.—Sarah once being a mother became jealous with Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, and she, quite regardless of the fact that she herself had offered her to her husband, wanted her to be driven away from their house, which was actually done. Hagar took again to the wilderness with her child, and having walked about for some time, it at last happened that Ishmael was dying of want of water, but, when he was already in the agonies of death, an angel of the Lord called out of heaven predicting that Ishmael would become the stock of a great nation.—This prediction must have been a great consolation; the angel would still have done better by bringing something to drink. After he was gone, Hagar discovered a well not far off.

CHAPTER XXII.—This chapter informs us of a rather strange command of the Lord to Abraham, viz., that he should go into the land of Moriah and there make an offering of his son Isaac. Abraham went thither, built an altar, bound his son upon it, and was going to cut his throat, but, behold, while he was in the act of raising his knife the Lord sent an angel to countermand the order.—From the circumstance that neither Abraham nor Isaac did protest against the command of the Lord to offer the latter one, we may derive what pious folks they were. Some, however, will say that to obey a wicked command proves less piety than to refuse abiding by it. A command given to a father to slay his own son, and then while burning his body to praise the same lord that gave him such an order, is a very wicked command, which Abraham would have done well to refuse—but we may suppose Abraham understood that the Lord wanted only to try him.

The angel of the Lord, full of enthusiasm on account of Abraham's rare piety, spoke to him a second time from on high. This time it was a repetition of that so often rehearsed promise, viz., that Abraham's seed should be in multitude as the sand of the seashore and as the stars of heavens. And his seed should hold possession of the cities of their enemies (these were probably the not circumcised people), and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed (v. 17, 18).

The phrase that all nations of the earth should be blessed in Abraham's seed, alludes, according to the Christian belief, to Jesus of Nazareth, whom they say to have been of Abraham's seed, and a blessing for all nations. Yet there is some objection to their explanation, that is, that the man of Nazareth was never a blessing for all nations, in particular not for the Jews. It is only the Europeans and their descendants in America and other countries, that be-

lieve in him, altogether only a fifth of the whole population of the world, who yet are no more blessed therefore than are the Arabians or Asiatic nations that do not believe in him, since they have to endure the troubles of life as well as those. It is true that Jesus teaches that whosoever do not believe in him is damned to the fires of hell, of which they, as Christians, will be freed—but even this very doctrine would show that he was not a blessing for all nations since there are so many more human beings that do not believe in him than such that do believe; thus the doctrines of Jesus himself should be a reason why nobody can sustain that he has been a blessing for all nations. Furthermore, the first part of this beautiful promise to Abraham, “that his seed should be in multitude as the stars of heaven, and that it should hold possession of the cities of their enemies,” never was fulfilled: now it would not be consistent to pretend that one part of the promise was fulfilled while the other, (and to that the most frequently repeated part), was not.—What the Mosaical angel alluded to when speaking of a blessing for all nations, was nothing less than the great code, or book of laws, of Moses.—Moses, namely, was about to lead his host into Palestine, and intended there to make them a great and glorious nation; for that purpose he had made mighty wise laws, full of the wisdom of the gods, and he thought those laws would civilize the whole world and therefore be a blessing for all nations. Was it thus not right that the angel which spake (and it was the hand of Moses that chronicled the fact) should foretell to the great-grandfather of the Israelites, that the blessing would come through his seed? This, when proposed as a prophecy, would make a greater impression on the people. That Moses himself entertained a high opinion of his law-book can be observed from Deut. IV, 8, where he says, “And what great nation is there that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as is all this law, which I lay before you this day?”—The proverb says, every one think his own goose to be a swan.

CHAPTER XXIII.—This time Moses announces us the death of the mother Sarah, in the blessed age of 127 years. Abraham went to his neighbors to buy a burial place: why he did not bury her on his own grounds, while they were extensive enough, since God had given him so much land, Moses does not explain. In short, we learn that Abraham was well treated, even respectfully, by his neighbors.

CHAPTER XXIV.—From this chapter we receive the particulars attending the marriage of Isaac, Abraham's son.—Abraham was growing old and well stricken in years (as the Bible says), and therefore he sent for his oldest servant to entrust to him some particular business, which he apparently wished to have done with before his death. The servant came and Abraham forthwith charged him under a solemn oath never to choose a wife for his young man Isaac from among the Canaanites. The servant did not object to swear this most solemnly; after this was done, Abraham laid a hard task upon him, that is, to go on a journey for the purpose of finding a wife for the youth Isaac (who

according to chapter next was just 40 years old). The servant took the camels and set out for the land of Mesopotamy. And fortunate the servant was on his errand, for scarcely has he reached the borders of the land of Mesopotamy, when the ingenuous expedient occurred to him to place himself on guard near a well, situated by a city, and there to await the coming of the women who went to draw water, and the one who should treat him in the most civil manner he intended to select. It was not long before the maidens of the city came; among them was a very handsome one, and who was a virgin, whom no man had known, (as if this was not the case with all virgins in those days). This maiden, having filled her pitcher, intended to return, but the servant of Abraham now approaching her, begged her to give him to drink, which she not only did but offered to water the camels. The servant was so much pleased with her that he thanked God for having been so fortunate as to find her. He gave her many presents, and upon inquiring who she were, was informed that she was Rebekkah, the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham's nephew. Having procured the consent of her relations to take her with him, by giving them plenty of rich gifts, they started together on the next day on the return. When bidding farewell to her sisters they expressed the hope that she might become the mother of thousands of millions of descendants, and that her seed should take possession of the gates of those who hated them.—This indeed was a beautiful wish to give a young bride.—When Rebekkah was getting near her new home, she at a distance discovered a young man (of 40 years); that young man was Isaac, but though she did not know this yet, still the sight alone of him was sufficient to make her faint and she dropped off the camel. Isaac immediately ran to her assistance and lifted her up and carried her into the tent of his mother deceased, and he loved her, and felt comforted for the death of his mother.

CHAPTER XXV.—Though we were informed in the former chapter that Abraham had grown old and stricken by the weight of years, (and no wonder, as he must have been now upwards of 140 years,) still we read that he married again; his second wife's name was Keturah. She bore him six children, all boys.—In Chapter XVII, 17, we saw that Abraham found the idea of his procreating children so ludicrous that he fell on the ground from laughing when the Lord told him so; now, however, that he was more than 40 years older, we see him marry again and yet beget a whole lot of children, and healthy ones too, for most of them became, so we are told, a little farther on, the sire of nations. Thus we see how Abraham's procreative power improved with the years. At his hundredth year he could not bring forth a child any more without the assistance of the Lord, while now, being almost half a century older, he became yet the father of a whole family.—Besides these six sons, Abraham had, they tell us now, several sons more of his concubines (v. 6), but he sent them all off to the land of the east.—Sarah, in her simplicity, had once offered him her handmaid. Poor Sarah, if she had known all, she would certainly not have done so.—When aged 175

years Abraham departed this life, and was buried in the same cave with Sarah.—The history of Abraham shows indeed some strange whims of the Lord-god in picking out his man, for Abraham had no peculiarity of a saint about him so as to be the favorite; yet he was the favorite of God. We can but think this was because he had always proved himself to be willing to execute the first commandment the Lord ever gave to man: be fruitful, and multiply.

Now that Abraham was dead, Isaac, his son, became the favorite. His wife, however, was barren at first; but at length Isaac prayed to the Lord in her behalf, and the Lord listened to him and Rebekkah became pregnant. And it happened that the children struggled together within her womb. Rebekkah not understanding what such could be, went out and inquired of the Lord what it meant. The Lord said she had got two nations in her womb, and the one was stronger than the other. When the time was fulfilled, Rebekkah brought forth, not two nations, but two male children. The first was red, and all over like a hairy garment; they therefore called his name Esau. The other was less hairy, and was called Jacob. The first one grew up an expert hunter, but the latter grew up a plain man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved his elder son, because he liked the venison he shot, but Rebekkah liked her younger one best;—probably because he made a less disagreeable appearance when yet a baby in the cradle, for, indeed, the other one must have looked like a little monkey.—And it once happened that Esau came home from the field quite faint, while Jacob was engaged in eating a meal cooked by himself. His brother begged to give him some of it, which Jacob refused to do except on condition that he would swear off his right of the first-born, to which the other agreed.—The plain man Jacob appears in this transaction, if we may use that expression, rather as a cunning rascal.—Seeing that Isaac was sixty years old when his sons were born, according to this chapter, and seeing that Abraham died 175 years old, while Isaac was born at his 101st year, it follows that Abraham must have been alive when the twin brothers were born. But this fact Moses has totally overlooked.

CHAPTER XXVI.—Again there was a famine in the beautiful land of promise, and consequently Isaac started for the land of Abimelech.—The land of Abimelech seems to have been a more desirable country than the land of milk and honey.—Isaac selected for his residence the place named Gesar, a city of the Philistines. Here it happened that the Lord appeared to him and repeated the same promise which he had repeated already half a dozen times to Abraham, concerning a multitude of seed as the sand of the sea, etc.; and this time the Lord added to the promise, the land where Isaac was now and all the countries around it.—It is to be observed, however, that the Israelites actually never got possession of the land of the Philistines, as they have never been able to drive them out or to subdue them.—Furthermore, we are informed that king Abimelech fell in love with Rebekkah (who, by the by, was mother of full-grown sons); Isaac by way of precaution had told her beforehand that in such case she should tell she was his sister so as to prevent his being killed for her sake.

But behold, it once happened that Abimeleck looked out of his window and spying into the house opposite, discovered Isaac sporting with Rebekkah. He, of course, conceived now how they had been deceiving him, but luckily for Isaac, he took the case in good humor and instead of killing him as Isaac had feared, he made him his friend, and made him rich. Isaac, having become rich, was obliged to leave the country on account of the jealousy of the Philistines. On his journey back towards his old home the Lord appeared to him once more and again repeated the same promise about the multitude of seed.

CHAPTER XXVII.—When Isaac had grown old and blind, he once wished to bless his son Esau, provided he would treat him to a well-cooked dish of venison. Esau went out to get the same, but Rebekkah, who had overheard the discourse, called Jacob and desired him to deceive the old man by putting on Esau clothes, and a hairy skin over his face and hands. Jacob went forthwith to mask himself in that way, and in the meanwhile Rebekkah cooked two young kids, which were to be instead of the venison. Jacob thus arrayed, approached his old father with the dish of bogus venison. The old man, after having eaten the two kids (for his appetite was great, they say), felt Jacob's hands, as the voice of the latter made him apprehensive of some trick; but feeling the hairy skin all suspicion vanished, and he blessed him with his blessing. Esau on his return home discovered how they had been robbing him out of his blessing and swore revenge.—Why Isaac did not bless him too, after he was told that they had deceived him, we do not know, but guess he rather put it off until he again should feel an appetite for venison.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—Isaac, after all, seems to have been somewhat amused about the clever manner in which his young one had been fooling him, for he sent for him and blessed him once more. Jacob commencing now earnestly to fear the wrath of his brother, left the paternal house and emigrated towards his mother's relation. He did so, also, with the intention of finding a wife among his kin. The first night of his journey he had to pass under the open skies, and took a large stone as a pillow. Why he did not prefer something softer, such as leaves or dry grass, or something of the kind, we are not told, but one thing is sure, Jacob dreamt heavily that night. For he saw in his dream a great, great ladder, reaching from the earth up to the heaven. Up and down this enormous ladder the angels of the Lord came and went, while the Lord himself was standing at the top of it, speaking from there to the sleeping Jacob, and renewing the promise, over and over again repeated, as regards the land of promise and the multitude of seed; but this time with the addition that he would protect Jacob wherever he might go.—This was very likely to reward Jacob's shrewdness in deceiving his old blind father.—When Jacob awoke, he poured oil on the big stone, which he had used as a pillow, and swore that he should bring him the tenth of all he ever should possess.—We doubt whether Jacob ever did what he promised; yet his pouring of oil on the

stone shows that he thought the stone was the cause of his dreaming, and deserved a compensation.

CHAPT. XXIX.—From this spot, (namely, from Bethel), Jacob continued his journey eastwards. At last he stopped at a well (the wells played a great part in those days), and he chanced to meet there with a young shepherdess. Jacob as a well educated youth, assisted her in watering the sheep, and gave her a kiss in the bargain. This last performance proved too much for his nerves, for he began to cry in consequence of the sensation it caused him. He accompanied the maiden towards her father's house and then learned that she was Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his uncle, (precisely the one that Jacob had wanted to find.) On being introduced to his uncle, he declared his intention to labor seven years for him, provided he should get the shepherdess Rachel as reward. The uncle accepted this, and the seven years soon passed by; they seemed to Jacob (Moses says so) but a few days. Laban, by that time, rather wished to get rid of his older daughter, who had got sore eyes, and accordingly married her to Jacob instead of the younger one. Jacob has not brought the case before the court, but simply satisfied himself to serve another term of seven years to get the younger daughter, (who by that time, in all probability, must have lost the bloom of prime youth). After seven years more he got her, and was not cheated this time.—His marrying two sisters, however, was not entirely in accordance with the laws of decency, nor with the Jewish law which prohibits such marriages. (See Leviticus XVIII, 18.).—Jacob's misfortune in his double marriage was that both his wives were barren. But Leah, his first wife, discovering that Rachel was also barren, suddenly began to be fruitful, and gave birth to a number of sons.

CHAPTER XXX.—Rachel, his other wife, did not like the idea of being behind, but as she herself was barren and could get no children of her own, she took her handmaid and made her bear in her stead and upon her lap. She got in that way several sons, so that Leah began to fall short; she therefore took also her handmaid and made her bear for her, so that the number of her sons exceeded that of Rachel.—What a happy man Jacob must have been, having two such zealous wives, assisted by such handmaids! Really a blessing of the Lord!—But at last Rachel, who had still the greatest charms for Jacob, had so completely made herself mistress of him that the other wife had no more chance to get at him. This was grievous, whereas she wished to have yet more sons; she therefore concluded to hire him for a night of her rival; in this she succeeded, and in consequence, she was delivered, in due time, of one more son. At length the Lord remembered Rachel, so that she also bore a son by herself. His name was Joseph.—The family of Abraham had, as we see, a strong propensity to procreate sons only, who, moreover, always became the fathers of nations or of tribes. The Lord attended to their procreation wonderfully indeed.—Further we learn that Jacob, (the plain man, dwelling in tents), knew a trick whereby he could

make that either white or speckled lambs were born, as he pleased, and by that means he succeeded in appropriating to himself all the flocks of his uncle ; by serving him one year for the white, and another year for the speckled lambs, and so on, until his uncle was poor and he rich.

CHAPTER XXXI.—The Lord-god appeared to Jacob and told him it was now time to remove from his uncle's house, and to return to the country of his fathers. Jacob consequently called a meeting of his family and acquainted them with his intention to leave the place ; at the same time telling them if he had become rich it was only in consequence of a peculiar blessing of the Lord who had sent his angel to cause either speckled or not speckled sheep to be born.—We know better, that it was not an angel, but Jacob himself who knew a trick to the purpose.—The next day Jacob stole away with all his wealth and with his large family, leaving Laban behind, stripped of all he got. Besides, Rachel, the sweet, endearing wife of Jacob, stole her father's golden image, the last piece of value left to him. Laban discovering their flight, pursued and overtook them and demanded his golden image ; now Jacob, not knowing who had stolen it, allowed him to search all over ; however, he did not find it, for Rachel had cunningly hidden it under her saddle-cushion, and when her father came to search her, she refused to get up, telling him the sickness of woman was upon her, which he believed, apparently not suspecting his own daughter to be the thief. When now the golden image could not be found, Jacob, in his turn, became indignant and managed so well that Laban was glad to make peace with him. They then took a dinner together, and the next day Laban returned, but without bringing home anything of all he was robbed of.—When we read such eddifying narratives, we do not wonder any longer why the Lord-god was so anxious to be a God for Abraham's seed alone, since the first fathers and mothers of that chosen race needed a most strict surveillance.

CHAPTER XXXII.—On his further journeying homewards Jacob had the pleasure to meet with large numbers of angels upon the road, and he said : " here is a host of God."—This circumstance gives us another proof that in that period, the angels used sometimes to take a walk on earth. And as Moses himself calls them men (Chapt. XVIII), and as the inhabitants of Sodom also took them for human creatures ; it is obvious that they got the external appearance of mankind, and were a sort of man. But how they, with a human frame, may have managed to come from heaven and ascend again, we really cannot imagine. They had wings, you will answer ; but, then, if they got wings, the inhabitants of Sodom would have perceived their celestial origin, and probably would have been afraid of them ; therefore, it is very doubtful that they got wings, and more likely we think they made their trip up and down per balloon. It is a pity that Moses does not instruct us on that point, for it would have greatly improved our geniographical knowledge ; we mean to say our knowledge of the nature and ways of living of the celestial creatures. But, unfortu-

nately, Moses has often forgotten to acquaint us with what would have been the most interesting feature of his accounts, and what he don't say we have to devise ourselves.

Jacob approaching nearer to his father's home became not a little uneasy about the first meeting with his brother. He therefore sent ahead of his caravan some men with an abundance of presents for Esau, displayed in the most favorable manner; next followed all his people and all his goods, even his wives and children, but he himself kept behind, and remained on the other side of the river alone. While thus alone a man passed by, and suddenly turning upon him, began to wrestle with him. Jacob proved to be a good wrestler, still, at last he had to give it up as the other one was more than a match for him, and besides, he had his hip bruised. Jacob then begged he should let him alone, but the stranger would not, except on condition that Jacob should bless him, against which Jacob protested, declaring he did not know neither him, nor even his name. The stranger was kind enough not to stick any longer to his point, and let Jacob in peace, after having blessed him in his turn, and having told him that for the future his name would be Israel, instead of Jacob, because he had behaved himself so princely in the wrestling match. Jacob hearing the man talk in that manner, noticed at once that it could be no one less than the Lord-god himself, and he was thus, after all, very much pleased with the strange encounter, notwithstanding his bruised hip.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—In the morning Jacob crossed the river, and met with his brother, who, forgetting what had passed between them in times gone by, embraced him tenderly, and wanted to return to him all the presents he had sent. Jacob, nevertheless, not trusting him, told him he would follow him to their home, but instead of that, he secretly, turned in another direction, and established himself in the neighborhood of the city of Shechem.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—Dinah, a daughter of Jacob, (for Leah had at length given birth to a daughter), was taken away by the son of the king of Shechem. He loved her and spoke kindly to the maiden, and even went in company with his father, to ask of Jacob the hand of the damsel. Jacob and his sons were much annoyed on discovering that an uncircumcised man loved the girl, but when pressed to give an answer, they cunningly granted the request on condition that the whole male population of Shechem should be circumcised; which condition was agreed to. But see, while all the male population of Shechem was invalid, two sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, went out alone, taking their swords with them, and coming upon the city unawares, slew all the male inhabitants, and the young prince and his father, and drove away the women and children as captives.—We perceive from this account, how craft was the principal attribute of Jacob's blood. It is not, however, so very certain that this story is true, since it is an impossibility that two men should have massacred all the males of a city with impunity; the males might be invalid, but still not so much so as to allow

themselves to be butchered without resistance; besides, the women, all conjointly, would have been able to defend themselves against two men. We cannot help, therefore, giving it as our opinion that this story is to be placed among the other fictions the wise man Moses indulges in telling us.

CHAPTER XXXV.—The Lord ordered Jacob to leave this place and to take his abode in Bethel, (the place of the high dream.) Jacob set off, but before starting he buried all the gods of the members of his family under a tree.—Each one seems to have had his own god, as well as Jacob had his.—When Jacob and his people left, the population of the surrounding country did not pursue them, for God had brought a terror among them. Thus the Lord, instead of punishing Jacob and his sons for their rascalities, much more sided with them and protected them. This was the advantage of being in favor with the Lord; one might sin with impunity as much as was agreeable.—While Jacob was on his way towards Bethel, the Lord appeared to him and again repeated the promise so often reiterated; but this time adding the promise that a crowd of kings and nations should come forth from Jacob's loins. Jacob was so much pleased to learn the capacity of his loins, that he set up a stone and poured a quantity of oil on it. After staying some time in Bethel, Jacob once thought of going up to pay a visit to his old father, whom he had not seen for so many years. He did so, and came just in time to close the old man's eyes, who died 180 years old.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—Now we are informed that when Jacob had once more fixed his domicile in the land of his fathers, Esau went off, choosing the mountains for his residence, pretending that the land of their sojourning was too narrow to support them both.—How Esau could call the land of Abraham and Isaac, a land of sojourning, while it was given to them by the Lord as an inheritance forever, and how he could find it not extensive enough to contain two families, while the Lord intended it to be inhabited by a nation as countless in number as the dust of the earth, this we really cannot conceive, and suppose Esau only intended to protest; for he being a mighty hunter, will have preferred the mountains and the distant woods, to the lowlands, so as to better indulge in his favorite occupation.—Esau when in the mountains became there the sire of the Edomites, for, says Moses, Edom and Esau is the same name.—Probably because both names commence with an E.—Among the Edomites many a mighty king arose; Moses mentions some of the most distinguished among them; we are glad at least to learn their names, as without Moses we would never have heard of any of these mighty men.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—Here we are told that Joseph, the pet of his father, reported to him all the gay pranks of his older brothers, who on that account did not like him, and when he furthermore began to dream strange dreams, the dislike grew into hatred, and they conceived the idea of murdering him. They would

have put their idea into execution were it not for the oldest brother Reuben, who was opposed to this action. They, for that reason, did not kill him, but sold him into slavery, so as to get rid of him at all events, and told their father he was devoured by wild beasts.—There again we have an example of the integrity and virtuous feelings of the sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, destined by the Lord-god to become the stock of his chosen nation. In former days he cursed Cain for having slain his brother, but the sons of Jacob, who were no better than Cain, were not punished at all. Abraham had been the particular friend of God, and thus, as a matter of course, his seed would participate in the favor.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—Judah, one of the sons of Jacob, took his residence at Hirah's. While there he got acquainted with a Canaanite damsel, and begat three sons with her. Two of them were slain by the Lord because they were very wicked.—The cause of their wickedness was, probably, because their mother was a Canaanite; had she been of Abraham's seed, the Lord would not have conceived such a notion as that they were wicked.—Further we read that Judah, (who, the reader must know, became the sire of the chief tribe of Israel,) once met his daughter-in-law between two fountains; she had disguised herself in order to catch him. He, upon seeing her, thought her to be a harlot, and at once, near the fountain, took advantage of the chance which thus presented itself. This daughter-in-law, for her part, made use of the opportunity to rob him of his signet, his scarf and his staff. Fortunate for her it was that she did so, for not with impunity could any woman have intercourse with one of Abraham's seed; also, it came to pass that she grew very much in circumference, even so that it attracted the attention of the folks of Judah's house, who reported the circumstance to Judah. He thereupon ordered they should burn her alive; but as they were about to do so, she jumped up, and holding out her hand, showed to Judah his signet, his scarf, and his staff, which he thought stolen by the harlot. When seeing what she showed him, he was dumb-struck on the spot, and did not repeat the order to burn her, but countermanded the same. Soon after this, the daughter-in-law was delivered of two children, both boys; the mid-wife took very great pains to ascertain who of the two would be the first to make his appearance in the world, or be the first-born, but, though she gave herself much trouble, it remained a case not to be decided on, as they both made a first appearance, each in his turn. The one was called Pharez, the other Zarah.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—Joseph, when sold as a slave, was taken into Egypt, where Potiphar, an eminent man, a captain of the guard of Pharaoh, bought him. He soon made him overseer of his house. Now it came to pass that the wife of Potiphar, seeing the young overseer, took a great fancy to him, so much so that she took it into her mind to seduce him; but as she was not successful in her proceedings, she decided to commit a rape. Joseph, the virtuous Joseph, however, was not so easily to be deprived of his virtue, and he escaped from her

embraces, having lost nothing but his linen garment, which remained in her hands.—The conduct of Joseph is, for a certainty, a very praise-worthy one; and indeed may serve as a good example to the young men (of later ages; nevertheless, that Joseph should have been so entirely an alien to the disposition of his patriarchal blood, looks somewhat extraordinary; or it must be that Mrs. Potiphar was not of the handsomest cast and not fit to the taste of any young man. If, though, Joseph had been less scrupulous, and had suffered himself to be seduced, we would, as we are aware of, have been left without this beautiful example of youthful virtue; but, on the other hand, what a benefit would the land of Egypt have drawn from this event! For we may be certain that at least, one, if not two, sires of nations, would have owed to this event their seeing the light of the world; but, alas, the Lord did not allow this so to be. Alas, we say, for Egypt!—The wife of Potiphar, finding herself placed in an awkward position towards her overseer, helped herself out of the fix by turning the tables, accusing him as her aggressor, and showing his linen garment as the price of her victory. The consequence was that Joseph was sentenced to prison for life-time.—Strange enough they did not burn him alive; but probably the Lord was with him, and prevented such a punishment.

CHAPTER XL.—Joseph, while in the prison, got once a fair opportunity to show his ability as an interpreter of dreams. In some of the preceding chapters we saw that Joseph himself dreamt dreams, of which he, innocently, understood nothing, but the dreams of others he did understand now. He interpreted the dreams of the butler and of the baker of Pharaoh's house, who were both put in prison, and his interpretations proved to be right.

CHAPTER XLI.—Two years later the king himself dreamt also; yea dreamt two dreams in one night. This circumstance disturbed him exceedingly, and he therefore sent for all the wise men of his kingdom that they should explain the dreams. None of them, however, could make out what might be the exact event foreshadowed by those dreams, (which shows that they were not yet very wise, since the plainest fortune-teller of our days would have given an interpretation.) Then, it happened that the butler remembered Joseph, and recommended him to Pharaoh, who instantly sent for him. Joseph explained: seven years of plenty would come over Egypt, and thereafter seven years of famine. This interpretation had the happy result that the king (without the slightest proof that what Joseph said was true), appointed him on the spot chief-victualler over the whole land of Egypt. And a good choice had Pharaoh made, for better victualler had never existed in the world; the king's granaries were filled in the seven years of plenty so abundantly that the heaps of grain they contained were as the sand of the sea, and could be measured no more. Joseph got married with a daughter of Potiphar's wife, and begat two sons, Ephraim and Manasse.

CHAPTER XLII.—And a famine came over the land of Canaan (the happy land of promise). Jacob, therefore, sent his sons to buy grain in Egypt. The youngest one, Benjamin, he kept at home. The sons of Jacob, on coming into Egypt, made their appearance before the great victualler, but did not know him to be their brother. Joseph, for his part, though he recognized them, gave them not to understand who he was, and seemed to rejoice in showing his power. He said that he thought them to be spies, and as they said that they had yet a younger brother, he ordered them to fetch him in order to prove their innocence ; in the mean time he would keep one of them, Simeon, as a hostage.—A fine way of proving their being no spies.

CHAPTER XLVIII.—The brothers, when returned to Canaan, went not immediately back to release their brother Simeon, for the old man would not part with Benjamin, and preferred, it appears, to see the other one in prison. Still, at last the famine began to rage so violently again that the brothers wanted to go once more, and this time they succeeded in getting Benjamin to go with them. They now were well received by the victualler, who invited them to dinner ; still, he gave to Benjamin of every meal five times larger allowances than to the others. They may, as it would seem from this, not have had too much to eat on this banquet, yet they got plenty to drink, which is at least something to speak of. That they got plenty to drink appears from the fact that they all got intoxicated, Joseph as well as they (v. 34).

CHAPTER XLIV.—When the morning twilight began to show itself, Joseph allowed his brothers to retire from the banquet. Yet, the strange idea came into his head (very likely on account of his intoxication), to play a bad joke upon his brothers, and to frighten them still more than the former time. He for that purpose caused his silver-cup to be hidden in Benjamin's travelling-bag, and when they were gone, he sent people to overtake them ; the cup was found with Benjamin, who, under the impeachment of being the thief, was kept behind.

CHAPTER XLV.—Joseph thereupon observing the anxiety of his brothers, could restrain his tender feelings no longer, and ordering all men out of the room, save his brothers, disclosed to them the secret, of his being their brother. He did this under a flood of tears, and sobbed so loud that they heard it all over town, even in the house of Pharaoh. He further told his brothers how God had blessed him, and made him like a father unto Pharaoh.—And Joseph told, also to the king what had passed, and Pharaoh gave him permission to send for Jacob and allowed him to reside in the best part of the land.

CHAPTER XLVI.—Jacob learning that his Joseph was still alive, set out for the land of Egypt. On the night previous of his departing the Lord spake to him, assuring him that he would follow him in Egypt, and return with him in later days.—Thus we see the Lord was obliged to travel, if he wished to be pres-

ent in another place; this however we knew already.—The number of people who accompanied Jacob on his journey was 70 men, namely 32 sons and grandsons of Leah and 16 of her handmaid; and 14 of Rachel and 7 of her handmaid.—We see that the legitimate wives of Jacob got each twice the number of offsprings that their handmaids had; this was very likely by special provision of the Lord, as was the case with their having born sons only.

CHAPTER XLVII.—The famine was very oppressive at the time they arrived in Egypt, but Joseph maintained them all with the bread of Pharaoh. This doing of Joseph was, it is true, a loss to the king, but on the other hand we learn, how much profits he drew out of the Egyptians in favor of the king, so that Pharaoh, after all, can have had no reason for complaints. In the first year, since Jacob's arrival, Joseph earned all the money the Egyptians got, by selling them bread in behalf of Pharaoh. The next year he took all the cattle of the Egyptians, in exchange for bread. The year thereafter he took possession of all the lands of the Egyptians, also in exchange for bread, all for the benefit and account of Pharaoh. The lands however, he gave them back, under agreement that they should henceforth contribute to the king a fifth part of their crops.—We may imagine how profitable an agent Joseph was for this royal bread dealer. Still we must say that fortune aided him very much, since the Egyptians were so passionate bread-eaters; for in any other country he would not have succeeded so well, as the people would have preferred eating the meat of their cattle to exchanging them for such expensive bread. Yet we do not see why Joseph gave the lands back with the agreement that they should contribute yearly a fifth part of the crops, for we saw in Chapter XLI. that he took the fifth part away without having the least right to it, hence he needed no contract on that point. However, considering all things together, we must acknowledge, he was the smartest financier the king could ever have chosen, and the ablest bread-dealer the world ever saw.

CHAPTER XLVIII.—Here we read the very affecting account of Jacob's last moments. The old man feeling his end approaching called for Joseph and his two sons. These latter ones he saw now for the first time, (though, according to Moses, Jacob had lived 17 years in Egypt.) He blessed them both, and as it was his first and his last blessing to them, we may imagine how solemn that was. What he said, was spoken in prophetic language, the essence of which was, that they both should become the sires of a nation (or tribe), even they should multiply like the fishes.—That this blessing must have been highly gratifying to the sons of Joseph is to be fancied, when one keeps in mind that one fish lays ten thousand eggs in a season, and some even more.—Thereupon he blessed Joseph, and presented him with a piece of land in Canaan, which he said he had won with sword and bow from the Amorites.—We never knew that Jacob had fought any more but the one wrestling-match with the Lord. It may be thought, that Moses has not related us all his grand feats. We must acknowledge that in case Jacob actually conquered a piece of land, he could leave its administra-

tion in no better hands than those of Joseph; however we fear that if Joseph should have tried to take possession of it, he also would have had to make use of bow and sword to do so.

CHAPTER XLIX.—After this Jacob called a meeting of all his sons, and blessed them all, speaking every word of it in prophetic language, and often using even elegant, poetical expressions. Judah was now number one on the list, and received the greatest blessing; he was a lion-welp, and his brothers should bow before him; the sceptre should be with him and should not depart from him, (namely from his descendants), nor the lawgivers from between his feet, until Shiloh should come; when Shiloh came, then, to him should be the gathering of the people. And Shiloh should bind his foal on the vine and wash his garments in wine and have his eyes red from drinking wine, and his teeth white from milk. (v. 9–13).—The Christians see in these words a very plain prophecy of their Christ. It might however be remarked that their Christ has the name of Jesus, which is not the same name as Shiloh. The gathering of the people, (viz. the people of Israel) has neither been towards him. Nor do we know that Jesus was in the habit of binding his foal on the vine, or of washing his garments in wine and having eyes red from wine. Moreover the scepter had departed from the tribe of Judah already some 400 years before Jesus made his appearance in the world; therefore, considering these differences, between Shiloh and Jesus, nobody with the least good sense can maintain that this contains a prophecy of Jesus. The Shiloh of whom here is spoken, has never made his appearance, but as it was necessary that something should be foretold by a dying patriarch, Moses thought it proper to let him prophecy a great king for all the tribes. Whether that king would have red eyes or not, did not matter much, but since the red eyes would be a proof of his drinking a great deal of wine, and this again of his living in a country producing a great deal of wine, therefore Moses thought it convenient to portray him with red eyes.—That Judah never has been a lion-welp, and that his brethren have not bowed before him, we scarcely need to remark, since every one must know that after Solomon the other tribes separated from Judah, and never were united again.

Jacob proceeded with his distribution of blessings, but we fear that to talk so much was too heavy a task for his feeble head, and that this caused him to talk delirious language, for we hear him say:

Issachar is a strong boned ass, crouching down between two burdens (v. 14.).

Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder on the path, that biteth the horse's heel, etc. (v. 17).

Gad; a troop shall overcome him but he shall overcome at last (v. 19).

Asher, his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties (v. 20).

Naphtali, is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough near a well, etc. (v. 22).

Seeing that to be fruitful was such a desirable thing, and that to be near a well was of great significance, we, on that account, imagine that the blessing

for Naphtali was a very desirable one. For the rest, we find all these blessings very poetical, but do not perceive the sense of them; whether Moses, the author of this book, did understand the sense of it any more than we do, we doubt very much.

CHAPTER L.—When Jacob was dead all the inhabitants of the land of Egypt, wept for him during seventy days. After the expiration of these days all the children and grandchildren of Jacob, and all the elders of the Egyptians went out to the land of Canaan, there to bury him.—Joseph returned to Egypt, had a happy old age, he saw his progeny, even down to the third generation after his sons, and the children of Machir were all born upon his knees—which seems to have been a peculiar good fortune.—When 110 years old he died.

EXODUS.

CHAPTER I.—Here we are informed that the children of Israel grew very numerous, and became exceedingly mighty. A new king (Pharaoh) rose up in Egypt, and he said: “behold the people of Israel is mightier than we, come let us deal wisely with them lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that when there be a war, they join our enemies and fight against us, and depart from the land.” Thereupon they set taskmasters over them to suppress them with burdensome labours.—From what this king said, we are inclined to conclude, that he was somewhat out of his senses, for, in the first place, if the people of Israel was mightier than the Egyptians, it was dangerous to undertake anything violent against them; besides Egypt having become their native soil (for they lived already 430 years in Egypt, according to Exod. XII.) there could be no fear of their joining the enemy, nor of their departing from the land, And even if they had done the latter, the king ought to have been well pleased since he deemed them dangerous companions. The whole speech is therefore nothing but a compound of nonsense; and the only thing which it shows, is, that in case the Egyptians suppressed the people of Israel with burdensome labour, they can have been nothing more but the slaves of the Egyptians, since in those days there existed no free labour, and the only condition between the one that ordered the work, and the one that did the work, was that of master and slave. Considering the people of Israel as slaves of the Egyptians, it would become intelligible why the king could have apprehensions of their taking up arms against the country, and of their departing from the country—but viewing them as a rich and mighty people (as Moses will represent them) the reasoning of Pharaoh’s would be pure nonsense, as we already remarked. We may then assume that the Israelites (Hebrews) were the slaves of the Egyptians.

The king of Egypt after having compelled the people of Israel to labour, even making their lives bitter with hard labour at mortar and bricks, and at

all sorts of labour in the field, called for the mid-wives of the Hebrews. They were two in number; he ordered them to strangle all the male infants, as soon they would come into the world. But the midwives feared God and did it not; the king therefore ordered all the male infants of the Hebrews to be drowned in the river.

That the Hebrews were slaves to the Egyptians is here so plainly to be seen from the proceedings of this king, that there is no room for a denial.—The slaves of olden times were originally gotten by making prisoners of war, and the children of those prisoners remained in slavery. The slaves of a country therefore were never all from one country and nation, but had come from all the different countries with which the one, where they lived as slaves, had been in war. The Hebrews, or slaves of Egypt, can not on this account be supposed to have been descendants of one people, but of all the different nations living around the land of Egypt. Even if one chose to believe they were all descended from one people, then every one would perceive that they still would have become a mixed race, since the Egyptians will not always have respected the virtue of their female slaves, so that there must have been into such a race as much Egyptian blood as blood of its own. The story which Moses forwards, representing them as originating all from one man, named Abraham, is therefore the most foolish tale imaginable, and it is almost inconceivable, that so many people are yet willing to believe such a story.

CHAPTER II.—And there came a man of the house of Levi, and he took a daughter of the house of Levi. And the woman conceived and bore a son called Moses, and as she saw he was a goodly child, she hid him away for three months. Fearing discovery, however, she put him into a basket and laid it on the brink of the river. Now fortunately it happened that Pharaoh's daughter came precisely to this spot to refresh herself with a bath. She on seeing the little fellow, took such a liking to him that she took it upon her to have him reared and brought up as if he had been her own child.—Fortunately Pharaoh did not entertain so sensitive feelings regarding his daughter's chastity, as did in old days Judah the patriarch, for in that case she and the little Moses would have run all risk of being burnt alive, or strangled, or drowned, but thanks to the forbearance of Pharaoh, Moses was allowed to live and to be brought up as a little prince, instead of as a little slave.—When Moses was full-grown, he made up his mind to visit his brethren; while doing so, he discovered that they were suppressed, and his anger waxed hot. He wished to free them from suppression, and it seems, expected to arouse them by giving them a good example, in slaying an Egyptian because he beat his slave. But Pharaoh being informed of the fact, sent out his men to arrest him, in consequence of which Moses had to flee from the country without having perpetrated his design. He fled to the land of Midian, where Jethro was priest. Jethro had seven daughters; and it happened that one evening, while Moses was sitting near a well, the seven daughters came to water their flocks; but the shepherds of the neighbourhood would not allow them to

draw water. At this moment Moses got up, drove the shepherds off and assisted the damsels in watering their sheep. The result was that Jethro invited him for supper, and gave him one of his daughters in marriage.—We see from this account why Moses thought so much of wells and fountains.

CHAPTER III.—Since that time Moses tended the flocks of his father-in-law. This he did during many a year without any peculiar occurrence; but once it happened that, while he had led his flock further than usual into the wilderness, even as far as near the mountain of God, that he saw a strange sight, that is, he saw the angel of God coming forth out of a thornbush, upon a flame of fire; and the bush was in fire but was not consumed. This strange sight aroused Moses' curiosity, and he decided upon investigating what it could be, but, when approaching, a voice called out of the bush recommending him not to approach but bare-footed, for the place was sacred. Moses, looking up to see who was speaking, beheld no less a personage than God himself in own person, standing in the midst of the thornbush. As may be imagined Moses was much frightened at this sight, so much so that he covered his face; God spoke to him in the following manner, and Moses, though frightened, had still enough presence of mind left to answer properly. God then told him, that he was the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob; he had seen the afflictions and heard the crying of the people of Israel, and therefore he had come down from Heaven to deliver them out of the land of Egypt, and to carry them into another land, into the land which he had given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a land of milk and honey, but now inhabited by Canaanites, Hittites, Evites, Jebusites, etc.—Every sensible person when reading how anxious the God of Heaven was to deliver the Hebrews from their bondage, we hope will join with us in avowing that this God of Abraham was indeed a very tender-hearted creature. It is odd, however, that he suffered them to be without his assistance for a period of 430 years (Exod. XII), but this must be explained by the circumstance, that he found before this day nobody fit to aid him in his undertaking, while now he got the man Moses to assist him, a man who had given proof of his hatred towards the Egyptians, by assassinating one of them. And how good was not this compassionate God of Abraham, to be willing to bring these poor Hebrews into a land which was inhabited by other nations, who of course, could not be expected to give up their land without resistance. One might as well say to any beggar that one meets on the road, "yonder fine house, which thou seest, I give it to thee, but thouself hast to expell the inhabitants from it." So it was here; the God of Abraham gave something away that was the property of others, who by a long shot were not yet made to give it up. But what did it matter, provided the Hebrews were allured out of Egypt, so that his friend Moses could rule over them.—The God of Abraham further ordered Moses to go to the Hebrews and to impart to them what he had seen and heard; at the same time he was to command them, in the name of their God, not to leave Egypt empty handed, but to take with them all the gold and silver articles of the Egyptians, and all what they got of value, in one word, they

should ransack Egypt. (v. 22.) Moses said he was not quite sure they would believe him ; and that he even did not know, to tell them the name of the God who sent him ; God then answered that his name was : " I am, who I am."—This was a very expressive name, no doubt, for every one, who he may be, has right to this same name. The declaration of Moses that the Hebrews would not know who was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, shows at once that the accounts of the book of Genesis were then unknown to them. That the Mosaiscal God was until this time unknown to them, we find confirmed in Joshua XXIV : 14.

CHAPTER IV.—Moses not yet quite convinced they should believe him, ventured to express again his doubts. The great God (I am who I am) taught him therefore to perform three miracles, that he might convince his people. Namely, the changing of his stick into a snake ; the thrusting of his hand into his bosom, pulling it out white as if leprous ; and the pouring of water on the ground, causing it to become red as blood.—What precious miracles ! worth to be taught by a God ! Every magician of our days would do the same without having it learned from so high a source ; but they are only common jugglers, while Moses was a divine one.—Posted up in this manner, Moses was sent to the king of Egypt, of whom he should demand the liberty of the Hebrews in the name of the Lord their God.—This proves again the Hebrews were slaves, for else their liberty needed not to be asked for.—Moses should do this in the following words : Thus saith the Lord, " Israel is my first-born. And I say to thee, let my son go, that he may serve me, and if thou refuseth to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, thy first-born." (v. 22–23.)—One discovers here that it pleased the great Lord, to call Israel his first-born son, meaning by this his favorite one.

While Moses was on his journey towards Egypt, he stopped at an inn on the road, with his wife and child. And behold what did happen ; on a moment when the woman sat alone with her babe, the Lord came in and threatened to kill the little boy. The woman understood forthwith, it was because he was not circumcised, and taking a sharp stone, cut off the prepuce of her child, and threw it before the Lord, saying : " surely thou art a bloody husband to me."—The woman was, it seems, under the impression, that it was not the Lord but her husband, who played her that trick.—The Lord went from there to Aaron, the brother of Moses, in order to inform him that he should go up to assist his brother in his work

CHAPTER V.—Moses on coming into the presence of Pharaoh, desired in the name of the Lord, he should allow the Hebrews three days, that they might go into the wilderness to bring offerings to their God. Pharaoh who it appears, knew very well that the request for three days leave, meant a leave for ever, refused to grant it, and said he knew not any Lord whose orders he was to obey. And be supposing the Hebrews themselves had sent the request, ordered they should give them more work to do, so as to work the rebellious notions out of

their heads. The Hebrews grew on that account very discontented with Moses and Aaron, saying they had made their savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh. (v. 20-21). Moses though, was not disheartened, and seems to have taken a firm resolution to bring the Egyptian slaves out of Egypt, even against their own wishes.

CHAPTER VI.—And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: I am the Lord, and I appeared unto Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name of Jehovah (Lord) was I not known to them, etc., (v. 2 and 3). Therefore, say unto the children of Israel: I am the Lord, and I will bring you out, etc (v. 6).—Seeing that the name of Jehovah is almost everywhere translated by *Lord*, we believe the sense of what is said, would have been plainer if it had been translated in the same way here. Namely, the God of Abraham says nobody has heretofore known him by the name of Lord, and therefore he wishes that Moses explains to the people, that he is the same one as the God Almighty of Abraham, though he will henceforth bear the name of *Lord*. A beautiful name is the name of Lord, indeed worthy of such a human God! That he dropt his name of Almighty, was probably because he had come to the unpleasant conviction, that he was not almighty, since he could do nothing without the aid of Moses.

The Lord assured Moses once more that he would release the bondage of the children of Israel; he would redeem them with an outstretched arm from the burdens of the Egyptians, for he would be a God for them, and he had chosen them to be a people for him. And they should know that he was a Lord, for he should bring them into the land, his hand gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and which he now gave to their children as an inheritance; for he was the Lord. (v. 6-8).—Though it may be that the children of Israel have come to the belief that he was the Lord, still great cause for it existed not, since he never kept his word. They never enjoyed any benefit of his special fancy for them, and never have had in possession the extensive country (between Nil and Euphrates) which his Lordship promised unto Abraham. (See our comment on this in Deut. XI.)

CHAPTER VII.—The Mosaical God entertained a high opinion regarding the excellent qualities of his friend Moses, for he said unto him: I have made thee a God to Pharaoh, and Aaron be thy prophet (v. 1).—It is something, as may be imagined, to be appointed a God. Particularly in those days it was worth the while, since in that time a God had not to trouble himself in the least about the laws of nature, nor about what was good or evil, but had full license to do whatever might please his fancy. Whether Pharaoh cared much about this God being appointed over him, we rather doubt, and firmly believe that he would have made him undergo the pain of death, without the slightest hesitation, if he had but known all his plots against him.—Further the Lord communicated to Moses his intention of hardening Pharaoh's heart, in order to procure for Moses an opportunity of exhibiting his great power of miracles and signs. These signs

would be so wonderful even as to astonish the coming generations.—That the Lord could harden Pharaoh's heart to procure for Moses the opportunity of gratifying his vanity, proved in fact that the Lord's heart itself was rather hardened; we were made to think that he was tenderhearted, but we discover that he was not.—The great miracles that Moses performed, were immediately repeated by the Egyptian priests. This shows that they were based upon priestly secrets. The priest of antiquity drew not, as the priests of the present age, a large congregation by making a sensation-sermon, but they allured their congregation around them, by performing some piece of necromancy; they were accordingly almost all dexterous magicians, knowing many secrets pertaining to the black art, and which secrets descended as an inheritance from father to son. Moses being the son-in-law of a priest, who got no sons of his own but only daughters, will have had his secrets communicated to him, and knew, we see, to make the most of them.—Notwithstanding all the miracles, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened. Apparently he was accustomed to see many similar miracles.

CHAPTER VIII.—An other miracle of Moses was to cause the river and the ponds, and the house of Pharaoh and his servants to produce plenty of frogs.—We do not know whether the Egyptians were amateurs of eating frogs, if so, they may have rejoiced over this god-sent miracle. How Moses produced so many frogs we do not precisely know, but seeing that fishes can be produced artificially and be sown almost like grain (as the pisciculture shows), we should not be astonished if that also could be done with the frogs. Their seed, or eggs, is to be found in large quantities in swampy places, and why should that, when transferred to another moist place, not come to maturity as well as do the eggs of fishes. Moses having many of the slaves under control, may easily have prevailed upon them to assist him in such performances of holy miracles.—Next, Moses brought over Egypt a prodigious multitude of flees, bugs, and lice.—A very god-like wonder at all events! By piling up a large quantity of old rags and all sort of filth, one will get in a short time a prodigious number of these agreeable insects, without any particular assistance of the Mosaical God.—Thereupon the Lord brought forth a frightful multitude of wild beasts (probably rats and mice) into the houses of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. For a moment Pharaoh thought of giving the Hebrews leave for three days, but the Lord hardened again his heart, and he would not let them go.

CHAPTER IX.—Another plague came, to wit: all the cattle of the Egyptians died, but those of the Israelites died not.—Such maraculous plague, though imposing, is easily to be performed with some poison, either in the drink or in the food of the cattle.—After this came again another plague; the Egyptians got all full of ulcers.—A godlike miracle! but it is known that nothing is easier than to transplant diseases of the skin. One has but to take the clothes of a thoroughly diseased person, and leave them for some time in contact with those of other persons, and soon they will be infected with the same disease. When

a man like Moses, who had the slaves of the Egyptians under control, would perform such a highly moral miracle, nothing was easier for him, since among the Hebrews the diseases of the skin were very common, as may be inferred from the mosaical laws regarding these diseases. There may be said that if Moses performed this miracle without the Lord, it was a foul act of his; we agree that the production of ulcers was a very foul thing, but the reader ought to bear in mind, that Moses performed his miracles for the glory of the Lord, and since the end was praiseworthy, we have not to censure the means.—After this followed a dreadful storm of hail, which destroyed all the crops.—This was a great plague, no doubt, but observing that a storm of hail is a phenomenon often occurring in summer time, and brought forth by nature, without human aid, and without having need of the intermeddling of the miracle-god of Moses, we presume that if a storm has taken place, neither Moses nor his Lord have had anything to do with it. But, since Moses was appointed a God (Exod. VII.) why, should we wonder at his fancying everything he saw in nature to come from himself.

CHAPTER X.—The Lord descended from above to inform Moses that he had hardened Pharaoh's heart yet a little more, in order to give Moses a chance of performing the last grand miracle, which would be such an amazingly great one that even the great grand-children of the Egyptians should remember it, and should know who was the Lord.—The great Mosaical God thought thus, that the only way to make himself respected, was by plagues and acts of cruelty. He wanted the people to fear, but not to love him.—The next thing Moses did, was not yet the grand miracle, it was only the production of a multitude of locusts.—A very troublesome plague, we confess, but as the locust pay almost every summer a visit to Egypt, Syria and all the countries of that region, this plague was as little a miracle as the hailstorm.—Thereupon came a thick darkness over Egypt.—A darkness can be occasioned by an eclipse of the sun; and a sort of darkness can also artificially be occasioned by a thick smoke of moist and rot-tening wood and plants. That Moses calls the dusk caused by smoke, darkness, we perceive in Exod. XIV. and Exod. XX 15, 18 and Deut. V. Now nothing is easier than to go forth a distance from a town where there are woods in the neighbourhood, and there to make a mock cloud of smoke by burning the woods and bushes and crops.

CHAPTER XI.—At last the grand final plague was to come off. This plague was, that all the first-born sons of the Egyptians, should die in one night. The Hebrew were however ordered by the Lord not to mention a word of it, and not to show in the least that the Lord made any difference between them and the Egyptians. They should also borrow of the Egyptians jewels of gold and silver, in order to take them with them when they started.

CHAPTER XII.—The night fixed by the Lord for the execution of his grand project, was the 10th. of the month. During the night of that day every Hebrew

family should roast a lamb and eat it until nothing was left. If a lamb was too much for one family, they should share it with their friends, for no piece of any lamb was to be left. With the blood of the lamb they should besmear the door outside, so that the Lord when passing by during the night to slay, might distinguish the Hebrew from the Egyptian-houses, and know where to send the destroyer (the murderer).—Seeing that the servants of the Egyptians were Hebrews, they probably have unlocked during the night the doors of the Egyptian houses, in order to get out to partake of the lamb with their friends, and in this way they may, unknowingly, have favored the entrance of the destroyer. Moses certainly must have known the reason why he ordered them to eat a lamb. That the destroyer would have been sent by the true God, nobody, who has some faith in divine justice, will be apt to believe, for the slaughter of the first-born sons of Egypt was the most unjust and cruel act to be imagined. The first-born sons could of course not help that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. A God could therefore never have been base enough to perpetrate such a villany, as is this murder of so many innocents. Such an excess of wickedness could only arise in the black soul of an ambitious priest, who, in order to hold himself the reigns of supreme command, did not care whether he made thousands of others unhappy. Who can tell us if not the ambitious Moses went out in the night, accompanied by an assassin, whom he sent in the houses where he deemed it proper to have one killed. It were not all first-born ones that were killed; the destroyer seems sometimes to have taken the wrong one, though he always destroyed one, for v. 30 says, and there was no house in which there was not a dead. The kingdom of Pharaoh was, they say, the ancient town of Babylon on the Nil, opposite the site where in later days Memphis was built; now the number of houses of a kingdom consisting of one town, cannot have been so numerous, or one or two assassins will have been able to kill a person in each house in the course of one night, provided the doors were left open. There is therefore no miracle to be seen in this plague, and it only could be mentioned as an example to show to what an excess the wickedness of the priest is apt to grow, when driven by ambition.—The Lord ordained this night should be remembered every year, and he described in a prolix manner how it should be celebrated.—The Lord seemed not to understand that the best thing he could have done, would have been to obliterate as much as possible this night of frightful massacre—but, alas, the heart of the Lord seems to have been yet more hardened than that of Pharaoh.

When the king heard of the death of all the first-born, he allowed the Hebrews to leave.—This Moses, says now; but afterwards in Chapt. XIV he contradicts himself on this point.—Moses gave forthwith the signal to start, and the Hebrews taking in haste all the jewels of gold and of silver, which they could lay hold on, from the Egyptians, followed him on the road of Succoth. They were six hundred thousand men strong, says Moses, not counting the women and children.—We fear that Moses was somewhat mistaken as to the number, for 600,000 full grown males would make a population of at least five times that number, the women and children also counted; and as we saw there were only

two mid-wives at the disposal of the Hebrew women, we cannot think that population to have been so numerous. Also, Moses will, probably have had no time left on the road of Succoth, to count them; what he says is thus merely a guess. In Deut. VII. 7 Moses owns that the number of the Hebrews was very small when they left Egypt.

CHAPTER XIII.—While now the Israelites were marching on, the Lord went before them. In daytime he kept himself in a pillar of cloud, and during the night he kept himself in a pillar of fire. (v. 21.)—The Lord seems to have approved the use of Russian baths; for, as is known, the Russians after having brought themselves artificially in perspiration, cool themselves down by a sudden plunge into a cold bath. The Lord did the same, after having passed the whole night in a pillar of fire, he cooled himself down on the next morning in a pillar of cloud. We hope his health will not have suffered by it. Whilst then the Lord sat in the pillar, leading the march of his chosen people, he left, as it seems, the rest of the world to its own fate, and no wonder, a gang of run-away slaves, and thieves besides, needed fully his most careful supervision. The pillar of fire, in which the Lord sat, was very likely a portable lighthouse, drawn ahead of the Hebrew host, on the top of which Moses kept a fire burning at night to lighten the way; but during the daytime, when the fire was smoking from under the ashes, it was a pillar of cloud. Such a lighthouse, built like a little tower, was at the same time useful to overlook from the inside of it, the whole army of Hebrews.

CHAPTER XIV.—When it was told to the king of Egypt that the children of Israel had fled (v. 5) he ordered forthwith six hundred iron chariots to be brought out, and went on the pursuit of them.—The expression “fled” shows plainly that Moses was mistaken in Chapt. XII. when he said, the king gave them leave to go.—That the king pursued the children of Israel was again a hardening of his heart by the Lord, to the effect of gaining to himself honor at the cost of Pharaoh and his host. (v. 4). The Israelites perceiving they were pursued, complained bitterly of having been allured into following Moses.—This again shows that Moses and his Lord were more anxious to free the people, from making bricks and doing hard labour, than they were themselves.—The pillar of the Lord who at first had gone in front of the army went now in the rear, in order to bring darkness over the army of the Egyptians, but light in that of the Israelites.—The darkness alluded to here, was, without doubt, a darkness of smoke. Namely, if Moses let burn on his pharos a large quantity of moist wood, then the smoke passing over the Egyptian army would make it difficult for them to distinguish what was before them or which road they were following.—Thus, wonderfully protected by the Lord, the children of Israel crossed during the night the sea, in a miraculous manner; the waters split asunder and were a wall unto them. The Egyptians followed them; but behold, when in the morning the Israelites had reached the opposite shore, the sea came back and

Pharaoh and all his host were drowned.—This, certainly, was a grand and timely applied miracle—but, why should the army of the Hebrews have gone through the sea, while there exist a way by land, viz., the defile of sues, which leads from Egypt into Asia; the miracle of splitting the waters and setting them up as a wall, is therefore entirely useless; and we for this reason do firmly believe that the Hebrews cannot have looked sharp out of their eyes when they thought to see walls of water; they merely may have seen a wall of rocks and sandhills along the coast. They marching on the beach, between the hills and the water, very probably have been told by Moses, these hills were the water standing as a wall, and as it was dark and many of them never may have seen the sea before, a number of them may have believed it. Moses most likely has chosen the beach for a road in order to make a shorter cut, and will have made use of the time of ebbing. The Egyptians following him closely, apparently, have not calculated that they, with their iron chariots, could not advance as fast in the sandy beach; and thus when the time of high tide came, they have yet been on the beach, while the Hebrews were already on higher ground. The tide of the red-sea comes very suddenly; they therefore had no time to draw their iron chariots up hill and were obliged to leave them at the mercy of the waves. Without their iron chariots the Egyptians could not fight, since their method of warfare was based on the use of these vehicles, they on that account, in all probability, have returned homewards; leaving it to Moses to tell they were all drowned. The Egyptians were unfortunate in their expedition, but a miracle is not to be seen in this event.

CHAPTER XV.—Moses now writes down the hymn which the children of Israel sung that morning. There must have been quick poetic spirits among them to compose a song relating to the occasion as soon as that. The song is not without character, since it seems to have served as a model to all other biblical poets, as the author of the psalms and the prophets.—Further we are informed that the water in the wilderness was bitter, and the children of Israel grumbled; Moses went to the Lord and told him this; the Lord thereupon showed him a tree, which Moses threw into the water and the water became sweet.—The Lord was sitting inside of the pillar, as we saw in Chapt. XIII; thus probably he pointed out with his hand, out of the pillar, the tree which Moses had to take. There are several trees and plants which contain a sweet juice, for instance the root of the Licorice is very sweet, and would give a sweet taste to water. It may be the Lord showed him a tree or plant of similar properties.

CHAPTER XVI.—When the army was led still further into the wilderness the children of Israel murmured still more against Moses and Aaron, and told them they rather had died in Egypt than wander in the desert; in Egypt they sat by the fleshpot and ate bread to the full. (v. 3).—This proves that the Hebrews had not so bad a living in Egypt, and merely had followed Moses on account of his promise of a land of milk and honey, which now proved to be the

desert.—Moses and Aaron entreated the people, most pathetically, not to murmur against them, for this was murmuring against God. And lo, what would happen—while Aaron was yet speaking, the Glory of the Lord made his appearance in the pillar of cloud, and spoke, communicating to the children of Israel that they henceforth should get meat towards the evening, and in the morning they should be filled with bread. (v. 10–12).—Considering that the Hebrews were starving, we must allow that the communication made, was for this once a divine one, but in all other times we would have thought such communication more congruous with the dignity of a cook than with the dignity of such a grave being as the great Lord of Israel. If the Glory of the Lord was personified on this occasion by some particular friend of Moses, who mounting into the pharos pronounced from one of its bullseyes the said communication, we cannot state to a certainty, but are inclined to think so, since a Glory, without mouth, cannot speak.—And it happened that quails came up at night and covered the camp, and in the morning there was upon the face of the wilderness something fine in grains, small as the hoar-frost on the ground. (v. 13, 14). And the children of Israel called the name thereof Manua, and it was like coriander seed. white, and its taste was like wafers with honey. (v. 31).—We will afterwards have an opportunity to discover that the quails came later (see Num. XI). Considering that the quails and the manna were eatables, they must have been exceedingly welcome to the hungry children of Israel, and worth to be called a godly gift; but that they herefore should have rained from heaven, we doubt very much, since they were, visibly, earthly products, and no products from the skies. There exist in the southern part of Asia, a tree, the name of which we have forgotten, whose seed is very light, so that it is carried off by the wind, sometimes to pretty great distances; this seed may be eatable; who now can tell us if not Moses has led his host to a place not far distant from a grove consisting of such trees? If he has done so, he has at all events done better, than to have led them into places where no food was to be found. And also the very plants, or weeds, wherewith the wilderness doubtlessly was covered, may have produced an eatable seed, somewhat resembling coriander seed. That the quails came at that place, was no wonder either, for they may have been almost as hungry as the children of Israel themselves, and have relished the manna as much as they did. The quails of the wilderness not being accustomed to be shot at by man, as do the quails of present days, were probably tamer, and, while greedily feeding upon the manna, may easily have been killed with sticks and stones. In Central America, they say, large flights of wild pigeons will sometimes fall down on corn fields and are then often so rapaciously engaged in picking the grains, that the farmers kill them with sticks by hundreds. Why should this not also have been the case with the quails of the wilderness?

CHAPTER XVII.—Again the children of Israel murmured, this time because they had nothing at all to drink; they regretted still more to be gone out of Egypt, and in their passion were on the point of stoning Moses and Aaron. (v. 4).

But Moses and Aaron escaped out of their hands. Moses now went to the Lord and asked what should be done. The Lord answered, Moses should strike with his staff upon the rock Horeb and water should spring forth. Moses did so in presence of a few Israelites, and the water came and he called the place Meribah.—Moses would have acted wiser by performing this convincing piece of miraculous power before the whole congregation; for, seeing that he has not done so, they could suspect him of having gone with some friends in search of a spring, and having found one, to have given out that he had gotten the water by a stroke of his staff, so as to make it appear more wonderful.—Thereupon came Amalech and fought against the children of Israel.—Amalech was probably a herdsman, to whom the spring or well, belonged, and who, wanting the water for his own flocks, did not wish to see it drained by a host of vagabonds; hence he tried to drive them away.—Moses and Aaron did not join in the fight, but went on the top of a hill. Moses was of great utility on that spot, for he, by holding his hand up, could make that Israel prevailed, but when holding his hand down, Amalech prevailed.—One should take this to be a great miracle, but the fact is, that anybody being on the top of a hill, can easily see what is going on in the valley, and can thus easily regulate the holding of his hand, either up or down, according to how he sees matters are going.—Moses tells us that Amalech was defeated, and he found this affair such a glorious war, that he exclaimed in extacy: The Lord will have war with Amalech from generation to generation!—From Deut. XXV we discover however, that it was not Amalech but Israel that was defeated.

CHAPTER XVIII.—Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses came to pay him a visit. He brought with him Zipporah, Moses' wife, and their two children.—of whom we never hear anything afterwards.—Jethro was greatly rejoiced, and felt sanctified, by beholding all the good the Lord had done for Israel.—What the good was is not plain.—And Jethro blessed the Lord, and declared he was great above all Gods.—There are accordingly yet other Gods.

CHAPTER XIX.—In the third month after the children of Israel had left Egypt, they arrived in the neighborhood of the mount Sinai and encamped there. Moses went up the mountain to communicate with the Lord. The Lord told him, he should advise the children of Israel to remember what he, the Lord, had done unto the Egyptians, and how he, the Lord, had carried the children of Israel on eagle wings, and they therefore should obey his voice and keep his covenant.—We do not see that the eagle wings of the Lord were very rapid in their flight, since the children of Israel after 2 or 3 months' travelling, were not further advanced than the mount Sinai, which is situated but a short distance from the red sea; we therefore do not see why the children of Israel should obey the Lord's voice out of thankfulness for that; nor do we see which covenant they should keep, since it was the Lord that had to keep his covenant (of bringing the people to a land of milk and honey) but not the people that had to keep any

covenant whatever, since they never had made one.—Further, the Lord made known to the children of Israel, that after two days he would descend upon the mount, and from the top of it speak to the people. At the same time Moses was ordered to prevent every one from approaching the mountain under penalty of death.—Whereas v. 6 says, the children of Israel were elected by God to be a kingdom of priests, we cannot suppose their footsteps would have desecrated the holy mount; thus we suppose there must have existed some other secret reason, why they were prohibited to approach; namely the mountain was to be fitted up for the occasion.—And it came to pass on the third day, that there were thunder and lightning and heavy clouds upon the mountain, and an exceedingly loud voice of a cornet was heard, so that all the children of Israel trembled. Moses went now to the people and bringing them out, placed them at the foot of the mount. They being there, the mount began to smoke at every part, and the voice of the cornet waxed louder and louder, till the smoke became as the smoke of a furnace; and the whole mount quaked greatly, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire (v. 16–19).—We do not read that the people saw the Lord descending from heaven, they only saw a great deal of smoke and fire, and felt the mountain shaking. This all, was, surely, a very imposing show, worth to be exhibited by a supreme God; if however Moses should have had dug with the help of some assistants (namely by those who were introduced into the mysteries) a number of little mines, and had them filled with some explosive ingredients, he could, without the aid of the Lord, have caused the same effects to occur as narrated here. There may be objected to this, that at the time of Moses the gunpowder was not known yet, and that he therefore could not have done such a thing. We nevertheless propose that gunpowder or something like it was actually known to Moses, because we see him perform several miracles for the performance of which some explosive stuff was requisite (for instance the falling down of the walls of Jericho, etc), and considering that the gunpowder was known by the Chinese, now four thousand years ago, according to their history, it would be nothing very surprising if the Egyptians, or at least the Egyptian priests, had also known it. Besides it was not necessary that it were gunpowder like that we use, since every combustible when mixed with salt-petre and sulphur, will become explosive and produce the same effect.

CHAPTER XX.—After Moses had reported the message of the Lord, that nobody should dare to approach him, the Lord began his oration. He then said: I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. Thou shalt have no Gods before me.—With these words the Lord introduced himself to the Hebrews, who must have felt greatly pleased by hearing it manifested by himself that he was their God. But as to his assertion of having brought them out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, the Lord-god was, to some degree at least, mistaken, for the Hebrews had fled out of Egypt, and could have done so just as well without the miracles of the Lord.—The Lord further said: they should make no graven image nor likeness

of anything, nor bow themselves before them.—That the Lord did not approve of seeing people bowing before images was certainly sensible, but not to allow them even to make likenesses of anything, was rather severe, since the fine arts of sculpture and of painting could not flourish in Israel with such a commandment.—For, said the Lord, he was a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.—It was not a commendable quality of the Lord to be jealous, but to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, was still worse, and proved that he was very vindictive and had not the least sense of justice, he therefore had no occasion whatever to boast of these attributes of a very inferior order indeed. Besides that he did not speak the truth, for he punished all mankind for the sin of the first parents, and did not discontinue his chastisements at the third or fourth generation.—He would be kind, continued he, unto the thousandth generation of those that loved him.—This also was not true, for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob loved him very much, they say, still the Lord showed no kindness unto their thousandth generation, seeing that to their descendants he never has given much reason to feel very happy under his reign. Nations of whom he never was peculiarly fond were much happier without his priests and his prophets.—The children of Israel were forbidden to wantonly use the name of the Lord.—Though we shall not deny that the name of *Lord* is a most beautiful name, much nicer than those of Apis and Isis the Egyptian deities, or that of Baal the Syrian God, still if the Lord chose to take a name bearing a title, than he should act according to it, if he wished to be respected; but when a lord goes fighting on the public road, as he did with Jacob, or goes into taverns and frightens women out of their wits by threatening to strangle their babies, as he did on the road of Egypt, then such a lord has no right to exact respect, and he had better make no show of his title.—The Lord also ordained his people to keep the Sabbath-day holy. Six days they might work, but on the seventh day they should not do any work, but keep it in honour of the Lord; for in six days the Lord had made heaven and earth, and had rested on the seventh.—To keep a day's rest after having worked several days, will, no doubt, be a wholesome thing, but to rest one day of the seven, because the Lord had been pleased to do so, was exacting rather too much from a man of industrious inclination. One loses in that way fifty-two days in a year, which in a life-time makes several years, without any one having the least benefit of it. The Lord may call such a day of laziness a holy day, but we think a day is made holier by industrious labour than by idleness.—The children of Israel should honour their father and their mother in order that their days would be prolonged in the land the Lord gave them.—The land the Lord gave them, was for the present, the wilderness, not precisely a land to wish one's life prolonged in. And what a strange morality the Lord inculcated into the minds of his children! They should honour their father and mother, not out of gratitude for the care they have taken of their child, when young, but out of desire for a long life.—The Lord forbade furthermore to kill, to commit adultery, to steal, and to bear false evidence.—These prohibitions are of importance, and might

have better held the first place in this list of commandments, yet it seems the Lord regarded the commandments concerning the respect they should pay his name, and the sabbath-day, of greater importance. Of how little importance the Lord himself thought the commandments prohibiting robbing, stealing and killing, would clearly appear from the fact that he himself commanded them (in *Exod. III : 22*) to rob the Egyptians; he furthermore led the Israelites towards a land inhabited by Canaanites and other peoples, and he desired them to kill them, and take their houses and vine-yards, and fields, and all they possessed. The commandments of the Lord, not to kill and not to steal, were therefore only idle words, without meaning what they purported.

The Lord also forbade to covet anything, whatever it might be, belonging to thy neighbour.—This prohibition is easily made, but seeing that the desire to possess a thing arises quite unvoluntarily, it cannot well be prohibited. Also the desire to possess is no sin of itself, it is the trying to take possession of a thing by unfair means, which is sinful, and against this sin works the commandment not to rob and not to steal.—The Lord recommending once more not to make anything of gold or of silver for him, but only altars of earth, ended thereby his harangue, and the children of Israel withdrew.—We soon will discover how little the Lord meant of his pretended simplicity, for he soon ordered a handsome tabernacle to be made for him, with all kind of gold and silver utensils in it.

These ten commandments of Moses are considered as extraordinarily beautiful and full of wisdom, even are taken as proof of the divine origin of the bible,—as if human instinct would not suffice to teach man to wish that no one might neither steal his property, nor kill him nor his friends. Every one knows that society could not exist if these natural laws were not respected. Besides, all the founders of religions have given the same commandments, as Confucius the founder of the Chinese religion, and Zoroaster the founder of the Persian religion, who both lived long before Moses, gave precepts nearly the same as his, and even surpassing his in sublimity. It is the natural human instinct which dictates such precepts, and it needs not a God taking the trouble of descending to the earth only for the purpose of telling us such simple things. It is more than likely that Jethro, or Aaron, pronounced these commandments from the top of the mount, assuming the part of the Lord of heaven.

CHAPTER XXI.—Moses having gone up unto the Lord, after the people had returned to the camp, received from the Lord the statutes under which the children of Israel were to be governed when in the land of promise.—Perusing these statutes there are some very excellent regulations among them, but also some very queer ones, which at once would show them to be a compound originated in an human brain, but not in the wisdom of a God. For instance: A Hebrewman being bought by a Israelite should after six years be free but if he chooses to stay with his master, then the master shall bring him to the judge and pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him forever. (*v. 2-6*) But if a man does

sell his daughter for a maid-servant, she shall not go out as the man-servant went out (v. 7).—If men fight another and the one smites the other with a stone, or with the fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed; and if he rise again and walk abroad upon his crutch, then shall he that smote him be quit. (v. 18, 19).—If a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he, or she, die under his hand, it shall surely be avenged. Nevertheless if he, or she continue alive a day or two, it shall not be avenged, for the servant is his money. (v. 20, 21).—If an ox gore a man or a woman that he or she die, then shall the ox be surely stoned. (v. 28).

CHAPTER XXII.—If any one steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep (v. 1).—Unfortunately the man who steals one has seldom five more to pay the fine.—If a fire break out so that the standing corn be consumed thereby, he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution (v. 6).—The difficulty is to find the man.—If a man do deliver unto his neighbour money or vessels to be kept, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, he shall pay double. (v. 7).—He that sacrificeth unto any God save the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed. (v. 20).—Accordingly all the nations of the earth save the Israelites should be utterly destroyed.

CHAPTER XXIII.—In this chapter the Lord gives some more regulations, as that the Israelites should, every seventh year, let all their fields rest, and not work all the year long. Also he ordained three feasts to be kept yearly, (later we shall discover that it was not done with three, see Levit XXIII), and further the Lord exhorted his people to mind his angel whom he would send before them to lead them into the land of promise.—This angel, of course, was the holy man Moses.—The Israelites should obey his voice, and not disobey him, for he would not pardon their transgressions, because the name of the Lord was on him (v. 20, 21). At the same time the Lord promised the people, that he would also send *hornets* before them, and these should drive out the Canaanites and Hittites, etc, from the promised land. (v. 28). Gradually the Lord would drive them out until the Israelites would possess all the countries situated between the Red-sea and the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river (v. 31).—The river here spoken of must be either the river Nil or the river Euphrates, as both are given as boundaries of the promised land, in Gen. XV : 18. That in spite of these promises the Israelites never have gotten possession of the land spoken of, nor ever have been assisted by hornets, are facts which every one will know who ever heard the history of Israel.—See about the land of promise our remark in Deut. XI.

CHAPTER XXIV.—After all these things were communicated to Moses alone, some other men, as Aaron, Nabob, Abihu and seventy elders, were permitted also to come up unto the Lord on the mountain, on the condition to bow down before him at a distance; Moses alone might come nigh. They went up and saw God

and did eat and drink. (v. 11).—Moses told the people all the words the Lord had spoken and all the judgments, and he wrote them down, and all the people answered with one voice, they would do all what the Lord had spoken. Moses now made an altar with twelve pillars and sent young men who offered burning offerings of oxen, and taking the blood of the oxen in a basin, Moses sprinkled half of it around the altar, and then reading the book of the covenant, he sprinkled the other half on the people, and called it “the blood of the covenant.”—Thus we see the original meaning of the blood of the covenant; the Christians however have deemed it proper to understand under this denomination, the “blood of their Christ,” but as we may perceive here, it was not understood in that way by Moses.—After this day Moses went again up on the mount, for now he was to receive the first ten commandments, which the Lord had proclaimed from there, and which he (the Lord) would write down on two tables of stone. Moses was accompanied by his minister Joshua, and when on the mount he was covered with a cloud, and he remained on the mount forty days and forty nights.—The Lord took his time to write on the two tables; however, it is difficult writing on stone, and probably, he had to use the chisel to do it. And as it must have been extremely tedious for Moses and Joshua to do nothing all the while, we may suppose they assisted the Lord in this work.

CHAPTER XXV.—And the Lord spoke unto Moses, and said: speak unto the children of Israel, tell them to bring me an offering; from every man whose heart prompteth him thereto shall ye take my offering, and this is the offering which ye shall take from them: Gold, silver, and copper. And blue, and purple, and scarlet yarn, and linen thread, and goats hair. And ramskins died red, and badgers' skins and shittim-wood. Oil for burning; spices for the anointing oil and for the incense of spices; onyx-stones, and stones for setting for the ephod, and for the breastplate. And they shall make me a tabernacle; and I will dwell in the midst of them. (v. 1–8).—Thus, the Lord wanted a tent, nicely fitted up, in order to dwell in the midst of Israel. He gave up his idea of dwelling in heaven. This is all good and well, but how he could reconcile his former notion of simplicity (of Exod. XX: 21) with his present taste for splendor and extravagance, we do not see; or it must be that this eternal Lord was very changeable in his mind. Yet we discover, from the list the Lord gave of all the articles he wanted, that the Hebrews must have carried a quantity of all sorts of goods with them, and we understand now why the Lord ordained they should ransack Egypt; it was because he wanted many good things for himself.—Of the shittim-wood the children of Israel should make a chest called ark, $2\frac{1}{2}$ cubits in length, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits in breadth, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits high. This was to be covered with a heavy layer of pure gold and ornamented with golden rings, to serve as handles. The cover of the chest was to be made entirely of gold and on the right and on the left should be placed a cherubim of massive gold; the wings of the cherubims should be bent in such a manner as to overshadow the centre part of the cover.—This order of making Cherubims was much in harmony with

the command not to make any carved image neither of what is on earth, nor what is in heaven (Exod. XX), because the Lord will have known that there were neither Cherubims on earth, nor in heaven.—In the ark were to be put the two tables of testimony, (under which denomination Moses understands the two stone tables with the ten commandments written on them.) Before the ark should be placed a table coated over with pure gold, and upon it golden vessels, dishes, spoons, candlesticks and other useful household articles should be set, and also a number of loaves. When the tabernacle and all its golden furniture were made, the Lord would condescend to come down to dwell among Israel, and, take his seat on the ark between the two golden Cherubims (v. 22), and from there issue his commands to the people through the mouth of Moses, and of the priests.—The great Lord showed by this intention his excessive fondness for the children of Israel, for one may be certain that the master of the whole world could have found a more agreeable place to sit down than a golden chest in a close tent, so that, he merely can have concluded to do so from an unfathomable deep love. It is true the handsome tabernacle with its golden furniture was not so very bad a residence for man, but still we might expect that the free air of the heavens would have appeared much more preferable to one, used to ride on the clouds.

CHAPTER XXVI.—The tabernacle, or tent, in which the ark was to be put, should be constructed of ten curtains, of fine linen and purple, and scarlet, and blue yarn, embroidered with cherubims of artificial work; the curtains should hang on pillars coated over with gold. How these curtains should be plaited, and how many loops and hooks the children of Israel should make on its edges, of all this the mighty Lord gave a most minute description.

CHAPTER XXVII.—The tabernacle was ordered to be divided in two parts, by means of a vail of blue yarn. One apartment should be the sanctuary, said "the holiness unto the Lord," and in it should be placed the ark of testimony, (probably the ark was called so because of the tables of testimony put inside of it,) as also the golden table with show-loaves. In this part of the tent nobody was allowed to enter but the priest alone. In the next part should be placed an altar made of Shittim-wood and coated with brass, having brass pots for the ashes, and brass shovels, and basins, and forks, and firepans, and the requisite number of vessels all made of brass.—We read in Exod. XX: 24, the Lord would only be offered on altars of earth, but now it appears, he altered his mind.—In front of the tabernacle a hall should be erected, and be called "the tent of congregation," as it should be kept open to all the children of Israel. In it the lamps should be kept burning without intermission, and the children of Israel should bring olive-oil to feed them. This was an eternal statute unto their generation (v. 21).—which did not last eternally!

CHAPTER XXVIII.—The Lord ordained furthermore that Aaron and his

sons should be his priests, and that forever (v. 1 and v. 43).—Unfortunately that family were not priests forever, since the highpriest Eli closed the line of these dignitaries in the house of Aaron, and the dignity went into other hands. Probably the Lord merely made this promise to brighten the visionary prospects of Aaron.—The Lord prescribed at the same time, and prescribed most punctually, what raiment the highpriest should wear. According to the description it must have been splendid, of purple and blue cloth with golden chains, and many ornaments, for instance a large onyx stone on each shoulder, and around the tail of the robe a number of small golden bells, which by their linking should warn the Lord of the approach of the priest into his sanctuary. (v. 34, 35). Also the children of Israel should make linen breeches for the priest, in order to cover his nakedness while offering. This ordinance was a statute forever.—We need scarcely remark that though this was a statute forever, the Jewish priest of the present times has to pay his tailor for his breeches.

CHAPTER XXIX.—The Lord prescribed how the priest should be inaugurated into his service. This inauguration required many ceremonies and many offerings—sweet savours unto the Lord. The breast of a ram, having been for some time on the fire, (that is to say, after it was roasted), should be brought as a wave-offering before the Lord, that is to say, be brought on the table which was placed in the sanctuary. The rest of the offered rams should be eaten by the priests, with the loaves deposited by the people into a basket which should be placed near the entrance of the tabernacle (v. 32). The festivity should last seven days. Besides the prescribed offerings the people should also bring unto the Lord a lamb in the morning, and one in the evening, as at usually times, with a certain quantity of flour for each lamb, and the fourth part of a can of pressed oil (oil was used as butter) and the fourth part of a can of wine with each lamb (v. 38–40). This was called the continual offering (v. 42). On the first day of the above mentioned festival, the priest should put on his holy raiments, also a splendid mitre, which should descend from the father to the son. Further the priest should be salved that day with holy ointment, and on the tip of his right ear, and on the tip of his nose, and on the tip of his great toe, some of the blood of the offered rams should be smeared (v. 20).—Probably to make the priest yet the more holier.—And the hand of the priest should be filled (v. 29)—(with gold and silver coin, we presume.)

CHAPTER XXX.—The Lord ordered also an altar to burn incense upon. It was to be made of shittim wood, with a layer of pure gold, and its tops, sides, horns and crown should all be made of pure gold. It should be placed before the vail which was before the ark of testimony, and the high-priest should burn thereon incense of spices, every morning and every evening, as a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout all generations (v. 8). The incense should be made of costly balm after the art of the apothecary, a pure and holy mixture (v. 34–35). Further the Lord ordained that when the census of the children of Israel was

taken, every one of them should pay a tribute to the Lord of half a shekel a piece as an atonement for his soul (v. 12-15), and this money should be used to buy the ingredients for the oil of the holy ointment, a holy compound made after art of the apothecary (v. 25).

CHAPTER XXXI.—And the Lord spoke unto Moses and gave him to understand, that he was aware that among Israel were several skillful mechanics, who were able to make all the things he had ordered. For instance, there was Belsa-leel, a man full of the spirit of God to devise works of art in gold and silver (v. 3-4), and Aholiab was an able man to assist him in his work, which all, who were wisehearted, would be willing to do, this the Lord stood assured of.—The Lord having finished the list of orders of what he wanted, delivered to Moses the two tables of stone on which he had written the ten commandments with his own hands.

CHAPTER XXXII.—The children of Israel thinking that Moses was tarrying rather too long on the mount Sinai, called upon Aaron to make them an other God. Aaron the highpriest did not object to it, and forthwith declared his willingness to comply with their wishes, provided they would bring to him all their golden earrings and ornaments, to make of it an image of their God. He made a golden calf, and proclaimed "to morrow shall be the feast of the Lord," (namely the Lord-calf.) The children of Israel kept the feast the next day, dancing and enjoying themselves around the image of their God; they kept the feast up for a pretty long time, so that when Moses and Joshua returned, they had not yet done with it. The Lord knew what was going on in the camp and told it to Moses, declaring thereby his intention of destroying his people; but Moses spoke in behalf of the people and spoke so well that the Lord repented of his anger and decided not to punish them. When Moses and Joshua descended the mount and heard at a distance the noise in the camp, they could not understand what it could be, and at first supposed it to be a voice of war, but when they heard singing too, they did not know what to think of it.—Moses had soon forgotten what the Lord had informed him.—Coming nearer by the camp Moses discovered the golden calf and the dancing around it; at this sight his anger waxed hot, and he threw the two tables of testimony, those precious presents of God, upon the ground breaking them to pieces. Thereupon stepping up to the image he took it down, ground it to powder and strewed it upon the water, causing the children of Israel to drink it.—The best parts of the golden calf he may have reserved as a wave-offering for what we know.—Moses now inquired of Aaron how he had come to commit such an outrage, whereupon Aaron said, that because the children of Israel were a wicked people, he had thrown their golden ornaments into the fire, and see, a calf had come out of it (v. 22-24) —Though we were informed that the Lord would not punish the people, still Moses seems to have entertained an other opinion of the matter, for he called a meeting of all the sons of Levi, and commanded every one of them, to slay with his sword, his brother, his com-

pagnon, and his neighbour. They immediately made an attack, assassinating in this way three thousand men, (of course unarmed men.)

CHAPTER XXXIII.—The Lord spoke unto Moses declaring henceforth he would no more accompany the children of Israel on their journey to the land of milk and honey, for they were a stubborn race, the only thing he would do was to send an angel before them to drive out all the Canaanites, Amorites, etc. The children of Israel on hearing this, repented, and brought the remainder of their gold and silver ornaments to Moses. This act of the children of Israel pleased the Lord so much that he altered again his mind and declared he would go with them. Moses now set up a tent, calling it the tabernacle of reconciliation, and behold, whenever he entered the tent a cloudy pillar came down and stood at the entrance. In this cloudy pillar the Lord was hidden from the multitude, but not from Moses, with whom the Lord spoke face to face, as a man would do with his friend (v. 11). And it happened that, whenever the people saw the cloud, every one of them arose, and worshipped before the door of his tent. The Lord, on one of those occasions, was speaking with Moses about their journey to the promised land; Moses then expressed his hope, the Lord would not fail to favor them with his Presence during the journey, and the Lord assured him that he would remain with them. Moses thereupon begged the Lord to show him his Glory, as an affirmation of what he promised, but the Lord answered that whosoever should see his face, would die (v. 20).—This answer of the Lord was rather contradictory to what Moses had just told us (in v. 11), of his speaking with him face to face; besides that, we read in Exod. XXIV: 10, that some select ones among the elders of Israel had partaken of a dinner with the Lord, and saw him, without having died.—The Lord, however, not wishing to refuse Moses altogether the sight of his Glory, condescended to show him at least a part of it, that is, he condescended to show him his naked back parts. To this purpose Moses should place himself in the cleft of a rock, and the Lord would pass by, divested of his cloud, but still would hold his hand before Moses' face while passing by, so that Moses should have no chance of seeing anything more but just the naked hindermost parts of the Lord when he would be continuing his way. (vide v. 21-23).

CHAPTER XXXIV.—Moses was now ordered to make two other tables of stone, alike to the first ones, and to carry them on the mount, when the Lord again would inscribe the commandments upon them; but nobody was allowed to come near unto the mount, not even at a distance.—The Lord feared perhaps they might hear the sound of his writing-pencil, which would have greatly impaired the marvellousness of the miracle.—This time Moses remained again forty days in company with the Lord, and as he asserts himself, without eating or drinking anything during all the time. When Moses returned to the camp his face shone like the sun, so that every one of the children of Israel were afraid of him; in consequence of which Moses was obliged to cover his face with a vail.—

This shining of the face of Moses was probably a consequence of the Lord's laying his hand upon it when walking in his glory; for the Lord most likely had his hands anointed with some holy anointments after the art of the apothecary, that may have contained some gold dust or other glittering substance.

CHAPTER XXXV.—Moses gathered the whole congregation and proclaimed the command of the Lord concerning the tabernacle, the ark, the altar, and all the other holy apparatus which the people had to make, and requested of the children of Israel their gold and silver.—As we saw from the preceding chapters that the Israelites had already spent all their gold and silver ornaments, it must be the Lord intended now to strip them also of their coin. If, with this view, he had ordered them (in Exod. III : 22) to rob the Egyptians and to empty the land of Egypt, we must allow that the Lord proved himself to be a shrewd financier, or rather, a well plotting speculator.—Further the Lord ordered Belsaleel, a man who was filled with the spirit of God to make any manner of cunning work (v. 31-33), to do the work.—It must have been a great honor to have been noticed by the Lord, and of course, worth the while to work hard for it without any pay.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—The children of Israel brought the required offerings, and to that brought so much more that Moses found himself under the necessity of prohibiting the free-offerings.—The people though stubborn proved to be religiously inclined nevertheless.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—Belsaleel made everything the Lord had ordained, from the tabernacle, with all it contained, down to even the holy ointment.—No wonder Moses had said, he was filled with the spirit of God to make any manner of cunning work.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—Belsaleel made also the altars, but for that purpose a new tribute of copper and brass was demanded of the children of Israel.—These poor children may soon have got through with all their gold, silver and copper; the more so because they had in the wilderness no means of earning anything. The kind Lord was thus a great taxation upon them.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—The children of Israel made also the robes of service for the priest, and set them off with jewels, as prescribed. When every thing was finished and properly done, Moses blessed the children of Israel.—This was the reward for all their troubles and expenses.

CHAPTER XL.—Moses himself arranged everything in the tabernacle as the Lord had commanded. He also anointed the tabernacle together with all what was in it, and after this he anointed also Aaron and his sons, and put the holy garments on them, sanctifying them, so as to be surely an everlasting

priesthood throughout all generations (v. 15).—A pity this everlastingness lasted but short, since the priests of Aaron's family were killed in Samuels time, this was surely a mistake.—When now everything was ready to receive the Lord, and the lamps lighted, behold, the Glory of the Lord (the cloud) came down and filled the whole tabernacle: And the children of Israel saw the cloud of the Lord remaining on the tabernacle by day, and by night they saw fire.—The Mosaical God seemed to delight in dragging continually along with him either a big cloud or a pillar of fire; now, as these interesting things are suffocating stuff in a dwelling if there is no chimney in it, we suppose he had also a chimney made in his tabernacle. A cloud of smoke, or a flame of fire might have come forth from it when a good fire was kept burning underneath, and might have been beneficial to the children of Israel by hightening their religious feelings.

LEVITICUS.

CHAPTER I.—And the Lord called unto Moses and spoke unto him out of the tabernacle of reconciliation, saying: speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, if any one wish to bring an offering unto the Lord ye shall bring it of the cattle.—Further we read the children of Israel were allowed to bring burnt-offerings; they should bring them unto the door of the tabernacle, and they should consist in a piece of cattle of the male gender, without blemish.

CHAPTER II.—It was also allowed to bring meat-offerings unto the Lord; they should consist of fine flour, mixed with oil and frankincense, (oil was used instead of butter). After such offering had been exposed to the fire of the altar for some time, as a sweet savour unto the Lord, it should be eaten by Aaron and his sons as a most holy thing (v. 3). Or, when any one wished to offer cakes, he never should forget to pour some oil on them. The cakes should be toasted on the altar and then be eaten by Aaron and his sons as a thing most holy of the offering (v. 10). Every parcel of meat-offerings, says Moses, should be seasoned with salt, for the salt of the covenant of God should never be lacking in meat-offerings (v. 13).

CHAPTER III.—A peace-offering was also allowed to be brought, and should consist of any piece of the herd whether male or female, but without blemish. The blood should be sprinkled around the altar, and the fat besides the kidneys should be burnt as in the burnt-offering, but the flesh not.

CHAPTER IV.—And the Lord spoke unto Moses and ordered him to say unto the children of Israel, that if any one did sin through ignorance against the commands of the Lord, he should bring a sin-offering; a priest or a ruler should

bring a female sheep, but one of the people could bring a female goat, without blemish ; its fat should be burnt as a sweet savour unto the Lord, and the priest should make an apology for him, and the sin should be forgiven.

CHAPTER V.—There should also exist trespass-offerings for sins committed not from ignorance.

CHAPTER VI.—If any one had stolen, or sworn a false oath, he should bring besides the trespass-offering, that what he had stolen, or gained by his false oath, with addition of a fifth part of its value.—Further the Lord repeated once more how a burnt-offering and a meat-offering should be managed, and at the same time declared that as much as would be burnt of it, would be a sweet savour, a memorial, unto the Lord, but what should be left of it, should be eaten by Aaron and his sons in the holy place, as a portion given by the Lord from his offerings made by fire, and it should be considered most holy, for every one of Aarons' progeny who should eat thereof, should become holy (v. 16-18).—And the priest that maketh the apology shall also eat the sin-offering ; in a holy place shall he eat it, in the court of the tabernacle of reconciliation (v. 26).—The tabernacle of reconciliation will, in this way, have had very much the appearance of a priestly eating-house.

CHAPTER VII.—And this is the law of the trespass-offering : it is most holy. On the place where they kill the animal for the burnt-offering they shall kill the animal for the trespass-offering. The kidneys shall be removed, but the fat and the body shall be offered up ; the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a trespass-offering made by fire unto the Lord, and every male among the priests shall eat thereof, in a holy place shall it be eaten ; it is most holy (v. 1-6). Also we are informed that the flesh of thanksgiving-offerings, with an addition of cakes, made of fine flour and oil, well cooked, should be brought by the priest, unto the Lord, as a heave-offering, and then be eaten by the priest (v. 12-15). The priest was obliged to eat that on the same day when it was brought, but when the offering had been accompanied of a vow, and a greater abundance of offerings was expected, then he was allowed to eat two days over it (v. 15-16). With the peace-offering, as with the fire-offering, the breast of the animal should be brought before the Lord as a wave-offering, where it should be taken by Aaron and his sons. The right shoulder of a sacrifice should also be waved before the Lord and belong to the priest, for the Lord had given the breast and the shoulder of the sacrifice unto Aaron and his sons, as a fixed portion for ever (v. 31-36).

CHAPTER VIII.—Here we read that the Lord commanded Moses to sanctify as priests Aaron and his sons,—but since we already read in Exod. XL : 16 that Moses did so, we do not see why it was necessary to do so a second time. The ceremony was solemn and accompanied with a great many offerings, which all

all are said to be burnt, save the breasts and right shou'lders which were placed into Aaron's hand to be waved before the Lord (v. 26-27) ; they were then taken off his hands by Moses, who burnt them for a sweet savour unto the Lord, save the breast of a ram which he took for himself as his private portion of the offering (v. 29). The flesh of the mentioned offerings which would not burn but remain on the altar, should be eaten by Aaron and his sons. They, therefore, were ordained to stay for seven days in the tabernacle, to eat all what was left, and if after this period of time they would not have succeeded in swallowing all, they were obliged to burn the remainder (v. 31-33).—We perceive by this that the Lord was very anxious to see his priests sufficiently provided with eatables, which truly shows how great care he took for their welfare.

CHAPTER IX.—After these seven days of priestly flesh-eating time, again new offerings were ordered, sin-offerings, burning- and peace-offerings. The breast and the right shoulders were this time also carried by Aaron into the sanctuary of the Lord, or to use Moses expression, Aaron made with them a waving before the Lord (v. 21). Now it happened this day, that while the fat of the burnt-offering was put upon the altar, and Moses was blessing the congregation, the Glory (the cloud) of the Lord made suddenly its appearance and from it came forth a consuming fire, consuming the fat on the altar. The people seeing this screamed and fell down on their faces.—No wonder the people fainted at the sight of the Glory of God ; yet we think that if Moses had caused a pillar of smoke to make its appearance and had placed within the same, one of his assistants (the Levites) with order to shoot off some kind of fire work, or fire-arm, pointed at the altar, the same effect would have been produced as described here. It may be objected that there did not exist any fire-arms, or fire-works, as yet at that time, but as we already suggested previously, it is likely the Egyptian priests may have known the gunpowder, since it was known at that time to the Chinese, who received their civilization partly from India, and India again from Egypt.

CHAPTER X.—Two sons of Aaron began after this to place the incense upon the incense-altar, and behold, while engaged in this holy work, the consuming fire of the Lord, suddenly came forth again killing them both.—Moses says, it was a punishment of the Lord because they would use common fire to burn the incense, but seeing that nowhere is to be found a command to use a peculiar sort of fire for the purpose, we suppose Moses conceived a wrong idea, and the death of the two sons of Aaron was merely the consequence of an accident. The Levite placed in the smoky pillar, may by accident have fired his weapon a little too early, and perhaps also he and the Aaronites were a little tight on account of some wine-offerings.—Moses prohibited that henceforth the priests should make use of strong drinks ;—probably the Lord had discovered that strong drink was at the bottom of the accident.

CHAPTER XI.—The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and informed them what animals might be eaten by the children of Israel and what kind not. The first were called clean, the other ones, unclean.—In Gen. IX : 3 we read the Lord gave leave to man to use for food every moving thing that hath life, now however he contradicts himself. The description, or classification, the Lord gives of the different species of animals is for the rest rather amusing, and shows that his knowledge of natural history was very limited ; for instance he says : all fowls that creep, going upon all four, shall be an abomination (v. 20). And unclean are among the creeping things that creep upon the earth : the weasel, the mouse, the tortoise, the hedgehog, the chameleon, the lizard, the snail, and the mole (v. 29, 36).—Accordingly the Lord ranks the weasel and the mouse in the same class of animals with the lizard and the snail.—Whatsoever, says the Lord further, walks upon the belly, and whatsoever walks upon four feet, down to whatsoever hath many feet among all creeping things that creepeth upon the earth, shall ye not eat, for they are an abomination (v. 42) ; and ye shall not make yourselves unclean with them etc., for ye shall sanctify yourselves and shall be holy, as I am holy (v. 43-44).—The Lord, thus, expected to make his people holy by means of a prescribed diet.

CHAPTER XII.—The Lord spoke to Moses and told him that every woman that had conceived and born a male child, was unclean for seven days ; on the eighth day the child should be circumcised and after this the woman should continue to be unclean for thirty-three days more. Making together forty days of uncleanness. But if she had born a female child, she was unclean for a still longer period, as she should then be unclean for eighty days altogether.—No wonder thus if the women of Abraham's family had given the preference to bringing forth male children to having female ones.—When the woman was clean again, she should bring to Aaron a sheep, or if poor, she should bring two pigeons.—Now taking in consideration that the children of Israel were to grow as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the grains of sand on the sea-shore, we fear that the priest Aaron will have got too much of roast mutton and pigeons to eat.

CHAPTER XIII.—And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron ; and, what he said, was this : if any one should get a sore on the skin, he should forthwith go to Aaron, to have it examined whether it was leprosy or not. In case Aaron should think it doubtful he should lock the man up for seven days, and then examine him again. Was it after this time still doubtful, he should lock him up again. If it proved to be leprosy, the patient should be driven from the camp (v. 46) ; but if the sore was healed, then the man should bring offerings to the priest and be pronounced clean.—The man had to bring offerings, probably, from gratitude for having been locked up for so many days.—We hope that the daily inspection of ulcers (for among a great and numerous nation many ulcers will daily have made their appearance) may not have spoiled Aaron's appetite

as this would have greatly interfered with his holy occupation of eating so many offerings.

CHAPTER XIV.—If the leper, after having been driven from the camp, chanced to recover, then on the day of his being cleansed, he should bring to the priest two pigeons for a burnt-offering, and seven days thereafter he should bring an ewe and two lambs of a year old. With this should be brought $\frac{3}{4}$ of an epha of fine flour and a log of olive-oil. After this he should bring a trespass-offering consisting also in a sheep with a log of oil, which should belong to the priest as most holy things (v. 18). Of the blood of the trespass-offering, and also of the oil, the priest should take a little in the palm of his left hand, and dipping a finger of his right hand into it, he should smear some of the blood and oil on the tip of the right ear, and on the tip of his right thumb, and on the tip of the right great-toe of the patient, and what might yet be left in his hand he should smear on the patient's head, thereby declaring him to be cleansed (v. 25-28). The patient having gone through this ceremony and having gotten rid of his offerings, was allowed to return to his friends.

CHAPTER XV.—The Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron saying: "speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them, when any man has a running issue of his flesh, because of the issue he is unclean." The man should be sent out of the camp, and all that he had used, his bed, his clothing, his vessels and everything, should be declared unclean and be destroyed. If he chanced to get healed of his issue then he should bring, seven days after, a pigeon as sin-offering and one as burnt-offering.—It seems therefore that in Moses time certain diseases were known which usually are believed to be of a later date, and which are often represented as a punishment of the Lord for the incontinence of the present age, but we see now that the Lord deemed it already necessary to send the punishment among the earliest generation of his chosen people.—When, as the Lord said, a woman had her blood flowing from her flesh, she also should be unclean, not only during the time it lasted, but yet for seven days thereafter. With her also, everything she used should be declared unclean and destroyed, and she herself be sent without the camp.—This ordinance of the Lord must have been rather troublesome for the Israelite-women; and very burdensome too for the father of a large family of daughters, since he will have been obliged to hire a country-seat to send his daughters by turns. And then the continual offering of pigeons, and the continual buying of new vessels must have been rather expensive.

CHAPTER XVI.—And the Lord spoke unto Moses. The Lord ordained this time that Aaron should bring him an offering to make an atonement for himself because two of his sons were killed by the Lord.—Why Aaron should make an atonement for himself is not plain, as it was evidently not his fault if the Lord chose to kill his sons.—Aaron moreover, should, make an atonement for the children of Israel; they therefore should bring him two goats, one should be offered as a

sin-offering, and the other one should be let loose in the wilderness, in order that she might go to the god Azazel; which would procure an atonement to the people for all their sins (v. 8-10). This ceremony should be repeated every year in the seventh month, and should be a statute for ever (v. 29). Yea, it should be unto the children of Israel a statute for everlasting (v. 34).—However, this everlastingness, as we know, lasted but short.

CHAPTER XVII.—The Lord commanded that henceforth no Israelite should kill an animal save in the court before the tabernacle, so that the priest might sprinkle the blood round the altar, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the Lord. This kind of offering was simply called a sacrifice; by and by it will appear that by these plain offerings, of which only the fat was burnt, the flesh remained at the disposal of the owner of the beast, save the breast and right shoulder, which were for the priest, as was the case with the peace-offering.—The reason the Lord prohibited that any cattle or sheep should be killed elsewhere, was, of course, to secure these pieces of meat to his dear priests. But as the children of Israel were to become as numerous as the stars of heaven, the Lord would however have done well by keeping in mind that the court before the tabernacle should soon become too small to kill all the cattle and sheep required for the use of such a nation. The abundance of sweet savours, occasioned by the burning of all the fat, might also have become troublesome at last.

CHAPTER XVIII.—And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: I am the Lord your God (v. 2). Ye shall do my judgments and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God (v. 4). Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord (v. 5).

In this manner the great Mosaic God gave to understand that he was the Lord, and he proclaims on this basis a large number of ordinances; he does this in this chapter, and does it in the following nine chapters of this book, repeating continually all what we read heretofore. In order thus not to be as prolix as the Lord of Moses, we will pass over the remainder, which we can afford so much the better since we have already spoken of all the offerings ordained.

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.

CHAPTER I.—And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of congregation, in the second year after they left the land of Egypt, saying: take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the descent from their fathers. The Lord named at the

same time the men he wanted to have placed at the head of each of these families (or tribes). Moses and Aaron did number the children of Israel and divided them in twelve tribes after the twelve sons of Jacob, each tribe containing the descendants of either of the sons; but as Levi should not be considered as a separate tribe, they divided the descendants of Joseph in two tribes, that is one for each of his two sons.—It is remarkable in this instance, that Moses and Aaron knew of what origin every child of Israel was. The Hebrews had been slaves, and will, of course, have kept no pedigree, and even if they should have done so, it would not have proven much, since they probably had no regular marriages, and the female slaves will have had children of Egyptian origin as well of Hebrew. The supposition that they should have kept pedigrees is therefore an absurdity; they moreover knew not to write and would thus not have been able to record the names of their progenitors. Moses could, for this reason, not know of what origin every one of them was, and can only have acted after his own fancy, by dividing them in different tribes.

CHAPTER II.—The Lord gave to know to the tribes in what succession they had to march. Judah should be the first, for it appears that Judah was now considered by the Lord as the principal of the tribes.—That the Lord who always blessed the children, whose father he had loved, thought so much of Judah was probably because they descended from the sons of Judah, born out of his adultery with his daughter-in-law.

CHAPTER III.—The Lord spoke unto Moses saying: bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron, the priest, that they may serve him, and they shall keep his charge, etc. We further learn that the Lord had taken the Levites from the midst of Israel, instead of every first-born that openeth the womb among the children of Israel, so that the Levites should be his; for he was the Lord (v. 12-13).—The first-born were, as we had several times occasion to discover, estimated by the Lord as being of higher value than the other children. Accordingly the Levites must also have been considered as being more worth than the other children of Israel; this probably was on account of their progenitor Levi, who so handily and cunningly knew to massacre all the inhabitants of Sichem.—Whether the Levites were real descendants of the man Levi, or were those men amongst the Hebrews, who assisted Moses in the performance of the miraculous Egyptian plagues, we are not prepared to say, but rather leave it to the reader's own judgment.

CHAPTER IV.—Moses was now ordered by the Lord to select the sons of Levi, of thirty years of age and upwards, until fifty years old, all of whom were fit for the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of congregation; and to divide them after their families, and give each family different work to do. The family of Kehath produced 2750 Levites; the family of Gershom 2630; the family of Merari 3200; all being fit to do the work in the tabernacle

of congregation ; and besides these there were yet 8580 Levites left, also fit to do the service of the ministry and to carrying the tabernacle.—It seems the Lord deemed the service of the tabernacle very difficult, since he wanted so many servants. The most difficult part of the service was evidently the eating of all the beef and mutton and fowls the children of Israel brought unto Aaron as sweet savour for the Lord.

CHAPTER V.—The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying : command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper and every one that hath an issue and whosoever is infected by the dead ; both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them, that they infect not their camps in the midst whereof I dwell (v. 1-3).—This command shows the charity of the Lord, the tender care he took for his chosen children.

CHAPTER VI.—When either a man or woman chose to make to the Lord the vow of Nazarite, then he or she should keep themselves secluded from the rest, and abstain from strong drink and wine, and vinegar and from grapes, etc., and not shave their hair. When now such a pious person after the expiration of the time wished to return again into his usual life, then he or she should bring, first, two turtles as a sin-offering and a lamb as a trespass-offering ; after seven days he or she should get the head shaved in the tabernacle, for which should be brought a lamb as a burnt-offering, a ewe as a sin-offering, a ram as a peace-offering, and a basket of bread and cakes of fine flour, and loaves with oil, as a meat-offering, and besides that some wine as a drink-offering (v. 14, 15). After the shaving was done the priest should take his part of all these offerings and wave it before the Lord (that is bring it in the sanctuary) as a holiness for the priest (v. 19-20). The pious one might then go home and drink wine if he chose.

CHAPTER VII.—On the day the tabernacle was set up, the princes of Israel, namely, the heads of the tribes, came and brought before the Lord a very liberal offering of bullocks and sheep, and meat-offerings on silver plates, all presented by the people.—This cattle was of course stolen, since they got no cattle leaving Egypt.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Lord spoke to Moses and ordered the lamps in the tabernacle to be lighted ; the Levites after having been purified (by being shaved all over and being put in clean clothes), were now to be invited to wait upon the Lord in the tabernacle. They all were brought by Moses before the Lord. —It was for a certainty very kind hearted of the Lord to receive the Levites before him, but as he had declared in chapt. IV of this book, and in Exod. XXXIII : 20, that no one should see him and live, he acted here rather contradictory by allowing them to approach him,—and partake dinner with him, for

we suppose he allowed them to eat the many offerings brought by the princes of Israel.

CHAPTER IX.—Moses tells us here about the first anniversary passover which the children of Israel kept, and further repeats once more that the cloud of the Lord appeared above the tabernacle in day time, but during the night there was an appearance of fire. When the children of Israel saw the cloud they rested in their tents, but when they did not see it they travelled on; thus they obeyed the commandment of the Lord, through the hand of Moses (v. 23).—This saying of “through the hand of Moses” is nearly an avowal of the holy man that his hand ruled the cloud of the Lord.

CHAPTER X.—The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: make two trumpets of silver to use them for calling the assembly; when they shall blow them, all the assembly shall meet at the door of the tabernacle. . . . and the sons of Aaron shall blow the trumpets and it shall be to you an ordinance for ever, throughout your generations (v. 1-8).—This ordinance *forever*, throughout the generations, has lasted but a very short time, yet on the other hand it is inconsistent in itself that this ordinance should have existed forever, seeing that the children of Israel were to inhabit all the countries between the Nil and the Euphrates, which effectually would have prevented the assembly from hearing the trumpets blown at the tabernacle.—In the second month of the second year the children of Israel departed at last from the mount Sinai. When the ark was to move, Moses said: “Rise up Lord” and when it stopped, he said: “return Lord” (v. 35, 36).—We discover here that Moses was greater than the Lord, since he could command him, to get up or to lay down, as the hunter does with his dog.

CHAPTER XI.—In this chapter we meet with a repetition of a former incident, viz., the people complained, in Egypt they said, they got cucumbers to eat, and melons, and leeks, and onions, and garlic, while here they got nothing but manna (v. 1-7). This complaining had a happy result, for a wind went forth from the Lord and brought quails from the sea and let them fall by the camp. The children of Israel gathered the quails and ate them, but behold, while the flesh was yet between their teeth, the wrath of the Lord was kindled anew and a very great plague came upon the people, so that many died.—For this miraculous plague something may account, namely, the children of Israel had eaten nothing but manna for a long space of time; perhaps had had nothing for several days, and now gorging themselves at once with the raw flesh of quails, the injurious effect of such a course could not fail to manifest itself. It is known that nothing is more dangerous than feeding starving people to the full at once; death is almost sure to follow in such case, as was here with the children of Israel, who had been swallowing too many quails. Yet there is to remark that Moses told us in Exod. XVI, the manna and the quails came on the same day

namely on the day of the Lord's proclamation out of the cloudy pillar, while now we see that the quails came much later, more than a year after that event ; which proves not for the truth of his first story about the manna and quails.

CHAPTER XII.—Moses married an Ethiopian woman. Aaron and Miriam, his sister, not liking to see him marry a negro, scolded him, but Moses who was a very meek man, the meekest man upon the face of the earth, according to his own assertion (v. 3), could not bear to be found fault with, and as a matter of course, the Lord also could not bear they should find fault with his beloved Moses, therefore the Lord ordered all three to appear before him ; and behold, while they were in the tabernacle, the pillar of the Lord made its appearance and struck Miriam with leprosy, so that she became white as snow.—Seeing that Moses had known means to cover the Egyptians with ulcers, it would not be an impossibility, if he had also known some secret means to throw leprosy upon other persons, or if no leprosy at least some disorder having the same appearance. The meek man Moses was a very revengeful man too, and seems to have studied especially these secrets of the black art, which enabled him to execute, under the cloak of saintity, all his diabolic acts of vengeance and spiteful ambition.

CHAPTER XIII.—The Lord ordained Moses to send out twelve men to spy the land of Canaan, so as to know the condition of the land, and who lived therein, whether they were strong or weak.—This shows us that, though the Lord assumed to be the creator of the whole world, he himself knew not how one portion of it looked and had need of human spies to find it out for him.—After forty days the spies came back with the report that the land was plentifully inhabited and possessed many walled cities, and very great ones too ; moreover the inhabitants of the land were giants, in comparison with whom the Israelites were not more than grasshoppers.—This report rather proves in favor of the Canaanites, showing them to be an industrious and healthy people ; and does not at all correspond with the ingenuous proposition of the bible-expounders, who would have it that the Lord wanted to destroy them, because they were addicted to immoralities. If they were so very immoral they would not have been such a healthy looking people.

CHAPTER XIV.—When the people heard the report of the spies, they lifted up their voices and wept all night, and murmured against Moses and Aaron. They declared they would rather have died in Egypt than be fooled in this manner ; they also threatened that they would choose a captain over themselves and return to Egypt. Moses and Aaron seeing what the children of Israel were, about to do, fell on their face before the whole assembly (v. 5).—We see that the holy man Moses, though the bosom friend of God, was still sometimes in the queer position to humiliate himself before the assembly of children.—The excited children however were not to be coaxed into good humor by Moses' humi-

liation, for they made up their mind to stone to death, him and Aaron. This, in all probability, would soon have been the fate of these two saints, but for a miracle; the miracle came and they were saved; namely, the pillar of cloud made its appearance before the tabernacle and the Lord spoke, saying he would destroy all the people by pestilence, making of Moses a people still greater and more numerous than of Israel.—That would say, even more numerous than the stars of heaven.—Moses however, not being egotistical on this point, prayed in behalf of the people, and he prayed in such sweet and enticing terms that the Lord declared he would pardon the people in so far as only to kill the men above twenty years of age.—This was probably in compliance with his promise to send them to a beautiful land.—The children of Israel, repenting over their rebellion, rose up early in the morning to try to enter into the land of Canaan, but the Amalekites came down the hills and defeated them and drove them back till Hormah (v. 40–45).—In this manner the Lord kept his word of giving them a land of milk and honey, which they had but to enter to find well furnished houses, and well cultivated fields, and vineyards well planted (Deut. VI: 11); for the hornets, sent by the Lord, should have driven away all the inhabitants (Exod. XXIII: 28). It is true, Moses says, they were discomfited because they went without the permission of the Lord, but when we read Deut I 29–32, we may discover that it was Moses himself who had advised the people to try the attack.—The spies who had brought the unfavorable report, died of a plague.—We hope, the Lord, or Moses, have not made use of poison to produce this plague.

CHAPTER XV.—Now the Lord repeats once more what offerings the children of Israel have to bring him when they are in the promised land.—Seeing that they were not yet in it, and according to the former chapter, had yet 40 years to wander in the wilderness, the Lord might as well have postponed this repetition until a later date.—The addition of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ hin of wine, for a drink-offering, was now ordered to be brought with every other offering.

CHAPTER XVI.—Korah, a levite joined with Dathan and Abiram to choose another chief over them and then to return to Egypt. They assembled 250 men around them and came before Moses, saying unto him that he took too much upon himself, and that they did not want him to place himself above the whole congregation, as he had not brought them into a land of milk and honey, but had put out their eyes (v. 13, 14). Moses said he would ask the opinion of the Lord, and if they would come back the next day he would give them the answer. They should bring with them each a plate with burning incense, and meet before the tabernacle. They did so, and see, when they were assembled, the glory of the Lord made its appearance, ordering that all the good people should separate from Korah and his men, as the Lord intended to destroy them all. And lo, it happened that the ground where they stood suddenly opened its mouth and swallowed all these men; and also the houses of Dathan and Abiram with their wives and children; and all Israel that were present fled at their cries.—This

sublime miracle of murder was easily accomplished by mining the ground and placing some explosive ingredients under it, and then putting fire to it at a desired moment. A man wicked enough to assassinate the first-born sons in Egypt, and to let treacherously murder three thousand men by their own companions, and wicked enough to throw leprosy upon his sister, and to poison twelve men because they gave a true report, such a miscreant is also wicked enough to perform a miracle of the above mentioned kind. That no God could have been so wicked as to punish, besides the rebels, also the wives and children of Abiram and Datham, innocent of the acts of their parents, is plain enough for any one who has some sense of justice, and therefore one can not admit that God should have lent his hand to perpetrate any part of such a miracle of wickedness.—The people murmured very much against the miracle, and to cure them of the murmuring, the Lord sent another miracle amongst them; namely, he made his appearance in his cloud, before the tabernacle, and while the people fell on their knees awestruck, he ordered Aaron to go between them with an incense-offering, to appease the wrath of the Lord, for a new plague was coming. Aaron ran with the incense-offering through the congregation, and behold, on his right and left the people fell down dead, so that he stood between the dead and living; 14700 persons died of this miracle, and when Aaron had returned to the tabernacle the plague was stayed (v. 47-50).—That the plague was stayed when Aaron had returned, shows that his incense, instead of being an atonement to appease the Lord, was on the contrary the very cause of the plague. There exist poisons the scent of which is sufficient to kill a man immediately; Aaron may have been burning a similar kind of poison, instead of incense, and have protected himself by having his mouth and nose covered. With such kind of miracles the good Lord of Israel kept his promise of sending his blessed people to a holy land.

CHAPTER XVII.—And the Lord spoke unto Moses and ordained him to inform the tribes, that every tribe should send in a rod to be deposited in the sanctuary, and the tribe whose rod should be in blossom the next morning, should be the one out of which the rulers should be chosen. Aaron put down his rod for the tribe of Levi, and lo, what a miracle! the next morning, very early, Moses on entering the sanctuary found the rod of Aaron blooming, and yielding almonds. The children of Israel, being informed of the choice of the Lord, cried, saying, we die, we perish, we all perish (v. 12-13).

CHAPTER XVIII.—Now the Lord declares once more that all the offerings brought unto him should be for Aaron and his sons, it were most holy things, and it was an ordinance for ever (v. 8-9). And every first-born in Israel should pay five shekels to Aaron, and every thing devoted in Israel should be for Aaron (v. 12-16). Yea every thing brought unto the Lord was for Aaron and his sons and daughters as a statute forever; it was a covenant of salt of the Lord unto Aaron and his seed for everlasting (v. 19). But all the tenth of the fruits

and the herds, brought unto the Lord, were for the Levites (v. 26, 27). Aaron and his sons might take the things they got wherever they pleased, for it was theirs as a reward of their service (v. 31).—First we were told they were obliged to eat it in the tabernacle, but we notice they had got some greater privileges since the successful miracle.

CHAPTER XIX.—The Lord ordered some offerings, wherewith many ceremonies were performed.

CHAPTER XX.—The people being led still further into the wilderness, murmured again against Moses, laying upon him the fault of not having led them to a land of abundance, but to a land of famine, and where there was even no water to drink. They said, they rather had died in the last plague than be in such a land (v. 4, 5). The Lord, for this time in a better mood than on previous occasions, ordered Moses to strike the rock with his staff and water should come forth. Moses struck the rock and the water came.—We spoke about this wonder already in *Exod. XVII.*—The Lord was this day quite angry with Moses and Aaron, and told them, because they had not believed in his word, they should never see the promised land.—It seems Moses and Aaron had not believed in the Lord—probably, they believed no more in the feasibility of conquering the land so much coveted.

CHAPTER XXI.—When the king of the Canaanites heard the Israelites intended to enter his land, he went forth against them, defeated them and took many prisoners. The people of Israel cried unto the Lord and vowed that if the Lord would give them the promised land they would kill every soul that was in it. The Lord felt so much pleased with their vow that he gave them forthwith the land *Horma* as a present.—We saw in *Num. XIV: 45* that the land *Horma* was far in the wilderness, distant from the land *Canaan*. The present can, therefore, not have been much worth.—Seeing that the land *Horma* produced neither food nor drink, the children of Israel, were obliged to leave it immediately after their arrival; they on this account murmured again. The Lord was much displeased with it, and consequently sent another plague. On this occasion it was some new kind of plague in the shape of fiery serpents which killed the people.—Whether Moses and his Levites made themselves the serpents of some bark, filling them with gunpowder and caseshot, and throwing them from above the pharos, (called the glory of the Lord,) we could not state with certainty, though we think it to be almost certain that such was the case.—The unfortunate chosen people of the Lord prayed unto Moses for forgiveness, and this act of submission pleased the Lord so much, that he ordered Moses to make a large serpent and to exhibit it upon a pole, and it would come to pass that every one, who was bitten (wounded) by the other serpents, should live when looking up at this one.—This serpent which Moses should exhibit, was probably some piece of fire-work, constructed by some Levite, and which Moses wished

to exhibit as well for his own gratification as for that of the people. That the Lord should have ordered to make it, is not very probable, for the Lord prohibited in his ten commandments the making of any kind of image; besides the serpent was the image of the beguiler of Eve, and therefore was cursed by the good Lord.

CHAPTER XXII, XXIII and XXIV.—Here we have the story of a heathen magician, who was invited by Balack, the king of Moab, to curse Israel. Balaam, the conjurer, would have done it, but for the Lord, who took the greatest care to prevent him from doing so. He visited him, personally, several times to order him not to do it, also sent his angel and made Balaam's ass talk with a human voice. Balaam hearing his ass talk was not in the least astonished, therefore it may be, this was no miracle, but a common thing with him.—Even in our days it is no strange occurrence to hear asses talk.

CHAPTER XXV.—The children of Israel lived in good harmony with the children of Moab for some length of time, even married their daughters. When the Lord discovered this, his anger was kindled, and he ordained Moses to hang the rulers of the children of Israel in the sunshine, so as to turn away the fierceness of his anger (v. 4).—Why he wished them to be hanged in the sunshine, was probably for the purpose of getting them dried up, so as to be enabled to keep them as memorials.—Besides this punishment ordered by the Lord, Moses ordered yet another one of his own accord; this was, that every Levite should slay a man who had had connection with a Moabite woman. Pinehas, a grand-son of Aaron, gave the signal of attack by murdering treacherously Zimri, a young Israelite, and Cozbi, the daughter of a chieftain in Midian. The massacre became soon general, and 24000 Israelites were killed by the Levites. The Lord was so extremely pleased with the conduct of Pinehas, that he sent him his blessing, through Moses, and gave unto him his covenant of everlasting priesthood.—Which has not lasted for ever.

CHAPTER XXVI.—The children of Israel were now numbered once more, and Moses again gives their number to be 630.000 full grown men, not reckoning the woman and children. Moses adds with some pride the remark that none of all these had been numbered the first time, as all those, then numbered, had perished in the wilderness.—Thus, these unfortunate beings who followed him, thinking to be led to a land of milk and honey, had all been led to their death—death caused by want of food, and by treacherous murders, and by all kind of torments, called plagues, administered by the hand of the angel of the Lord, the great man Moses,—the tormentor of Israel.

CHAPTER XXVII.—Moses, after giving some instructions concerning the division of an inheritance in case there were no male descendants among the heirs, of a sudden informs us that the Lord had ordained him to die on the top of

a mount, in the same manner as Aaron had died already ; but before dying he should transfer a part of his saintity unto Joshua his servant, a man in whom was the spirit of God.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—Moses nevertheless did not die presently, for he, before obeying the command, enumerates once more all the offerings the children of Israel should have to bring to the priest.

Seeing that this, and the other eight chapters of this book, contain nothing but repetitions of what we read heretofore, we pass over the rest.

DEUTERONOMY.

CHAPTER I.—Though we were informed in the former book, that Moses had to die, still he seems to have taken his time before obeying the order, for he commences now to write one book more, on the history of Israel and the offerings the people had to bring, all things which he told us previously, so that this book could easily have been spared.—He commences the book from the time when he complained unto the Lord about the murmuring of the people, saying the burden of all the people was too much for him to carry. Now to explain why the burden was too much, he says, for the people had grown in multitude as the stars of heaven ; the Lord had made them thousand times more numerous than they had been.—There were now 630.000 men left, a proof that in case their number had grown so very much, the number he gives at their departure from Egypt must have been wrong.—In the course of the chapter (from v. 26–32) he tells us that the children of Israel would not go up to fight against the Canaanites, when the first attack took place, while in Numb. XIV he would make us believe the people were defeated, because they went up of their own accord, without direction of the Lord. The holy man contradicts himself here once more.

CHAPTER II.—Here Moses speaks of nations of giants who lived in Canaan and were all destroyed by the Lord in favor of Israel. The king of the Amorites had also had his heart hardened by the Lord, so as to come out to fight and to get beaten by the hosts of Israel, who utterly destroyed all their cities, so that none of this nation was left alive.

CHAPTER III.—Still more glorious feats are told here, where women and little ones were murdered, and sixty cities destroyed, so entirely destroyed that the place where they had been, could be found no more.—Probably, for the manifest reason that they never had existed.—The king of Bashan was killed too, he was

the last of the giants, and his iron bedstead which was nine cubits long was yet kept for a rare-show by some of his neighbors.

CHAPTER IV.—The children of Israel are again exhorted to keep faithfully the commands of the Lord, for says Moses, what nation have their God so nigh as the Lord, our God, is with us.—The Lord took evidently no care of the other nations.—And what nation is there so great that hath the statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before You this day? (v. 8).—This day, would show that Moses has not been in a hurry to give his law-book, since he gives it at so late a date; besides we see from these words how big an opinion he had of his laws and statutes—which, truly, did not deserve so much admiration.—Further, (and following v. 25) he prohibits once more the making of carved images. the day they should do such a thing, the children of Israel should be scattered among the other nations; only a few should be left among the heathens, and be compelled to serve other Gods.—Since it has, accidentally, happened that Israel had been scattered among the other nations, the friends of the bible see herein a proof of its truth. The bible-friends will however do well by observing that they were scattered among other nations in consequence of their hostile conduct towards all their neighbours, but not on account of their making images. And besides, Moses said, a few should be left and be compelled to serve other gods; as the latter has never been the case with the Jews, it shows that this so-called prophecy is very incorrect.

CHAPTER V.—Here Moses repeats the ten commandments once more, and remembers on this occasion how terrified the people were, when hearing the voice out of the midst of the darkness, when the mountain was burning with fire (v. 23–25).—Seeing that there can be no darkness where a mountain is in fire, it is plain that Moses gives to clouds of smoke the name of darkness. This explains for the miracles where darkness plays the chief part.

CHAPTER VI.—Moses exhorts the people with solicitude, to keep all the statutes and commandments of the Lord, which he Moses communicated to them, in order that they themselves and their sons might live long and increase mightily (v. 2–3).—To increase mightily was a beautiful reward and it was worth to keep for that reason all the queer statutes of the Mosaic code; if however Moses had got an idea of an existence hereafter, he might, perhaps, with still more effect have promised a heaven for the pious souls.—Furthermore he says, the Israelites should find at their disposal when entering Canaan, goodly cities, which they did not build, houses full of all good things, which they filled not, and vineyards and olive trees, which they planted not, etc, as presents given to them by the Lord (v. 10–11).—It was, of course, very friendly of the Lord if he intended to give so much, but unfortunately the Israelites have never gotten anything of all these presents, and if they had accepted these presents they would have been obliged to take them themselves from the Canaanites and would have had to fight hard for it.

CHAPTER VII.—The nations which lived in the promised land, and were to be destroyed by the Lord for the sake of Israel, are now enumerated.—Among them were the Amorites, of whom we are already twice informed (in Deut. II. and Deut. III.) that they were destroyed entirely so that no one of them were left.—Moses declares (in v. 1) that the seven nations which lived in Canaan were greater than Israel, also in v. 7 he says, the Israelites were the fewest of all people.—This declaration does not well agree with the pompous exclamation in Deut. I: 7, where he says: behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven in multitude.—Moses gives in this chapter some new precepts, and gives utterance to some views, which were quite apt to make his superstitious nation the most intolerable foes to all other ones; for instance, he teaches: The Israelites should never make a covenant with their enemies (the not circumcised nations), nor show mercy unto them, but continually make war upon them, and utterly destroy them. (v. 1.) They should never join in marriage with them, but destroy their altars, break down their images, and cut down their groves, for the children of Israel were a holy people unto the Lord, who had chosen them to be a special people unto himself (v. 3-6). Also the children of Israel should be blessed above all people, neither male nor female among them should be barren, and no evil diseases should they get, for all these evils the Lord should lay upon those that hate Israel (v. 14-15). And the Lord would destroy all the nations, and would deliver them into the hands of Israel, and Israel should have no mercy upon them. Moreover the Lord would send harnets to destroy all fugitives who hid themselves from the sight of the Israelites (v. 16 and 20).

CHAPTER VIII.—Moses says again, the children of Israel should observe all the commandments of the Lord, so that they might live and increase in number.—Thus, if an Israelite died an early death, his friends would have to infer from it his having not kept the commandments; while again, every one growing old and having plenty of posterity, must have been a pious one, according to this doctrine.—The children of Israel should also bear continually in mind how good the Lord had been to them, in keeping them in the wilderness for forty years, in order to teach them that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord (v. 2, 3).—The holy man had better said “by every thing that goes into the mouth of the Lord;” for the Lord consumed so many meat-offerings and drink-offerings, and other offerings of most holy things (in the shape of roast-beef and mutton), that an army of men might have lived upon it.—To conclude his exhortations Moses says, they should also remember that the Lord, their God, brought them through a terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and no water to drink.—This were beautiful things indeed, worth to be remembered and to be thankful for! Probably Moses thought to make the people still more afraid of the Lord (their bugbear) by exhorting them to thankfulness in this mocking way.

CHAPTER IX.—Now Moses informs the children of Israel that the time has come to cross the river Jordan, which separated them from the desirable land. The Lord would give them that land, and destroy all its inhabitants with a consuming fire; the Israelites, however, should not deem themselves righteous on that account, for this they were not, they were a stubborn and hardened people, but it was mere kindness of the Lord to give them the land of promise.

CHAPTER X.—Moses continues to exhort the people: The Lord had been so very good towards the children of Israel, he says, and what did the Lord require in return, nothing, only he required they should fear him, and love him, and serve him, with all their hearts and all their zeal.—We have seen in what consisted the fear of the Lord, namely, it consisted in fearing implicitly Moses and the priests; the love of the Lord consisted in the bringing of an countless amount of presents (in the shape of offerings) to the priests; and to serve the Lord consisted in killing as many Canaanites as possible, so that the priests might have their share of the booty, and consisted further in passing the Sabbaths-days, and many other holy days, in utter idleness, save the bringing of offerings to the priests.—The Lord, says Moses, doth protect the rights of the fatherless and widows, and loveth the stranger.—The love the Lord felt towards widows is well illustrated in Numb. XXXI., where we read that the Lord ordered the massacre of thirty thousand defenceless widows, who were in the camp of the Israelites. And the love the Lord felt for strangers, we may form a correct idea of from Deut. VII.

CHAPTER XI.—Moses gives once more the assurance that the children of Israel shall come into a beautiful land, a land of milk and honey, where they will not be obliged, as in Egypt, to sow the seed, but where everything grows of itself, for the Lord takes care thereof, and provides for rain and sun-shine in due season, so that the children of Israel will get plenty, and eat to the full, and have nothing to care for but to listen diligently to the commandments of the Lord.—The poor children of Israel must have been awfully disappointed when coming into Canaan, and finding there a land in nothing superior to other countries, and where they had to sow the seed, if they wished to get bread to eat with their milk and honey. Observing furthermore that the land of Canaan, instead of being more fertile than other countries, is even barren for a great part, we on that account almost believe that Moses himself would also have been disappointed had he seen the land. The land of milk and honey which Moses originally intended to go to, was very likely the land afterwards called "Cœle-Syria" (Happy Syria), being a part of Syria, and thus called on account of its beautiful climate and fertile soil. This country was situated to the north-east of Palestine, and either Moses must have been led by an error to suppose Canaan to be this coveted land, or he must have found out that the conquest of a country was more difficult than he anticipated, and have given up his plan of going any further. It is true that the Lord promised unto Abraham all the

countries situated between the sea and the river Euphrates (it is repeated here in v. 24), and that Canaan makes part of it, but again the most blessed spot, designated as the land of milk and honey, and where Moses intended to go first, in order to further extend his dominions from that point, may still have been the happy land of Coele-Syria. That the children of Israel never had possession of the land promised them in v. 24 of this chapter, also promised in Gen. XV : 18, must be known to every one who knows a little of history. They never got anything more, in full possession, but a small part of it, chiefly the unfertile country of Judea, about 150 geographical square miles in extent (say 10 in breadth by 15 in length), so that a good pedestrian might have crossed their land in one day.

CHAPTER XII.—This chapter and the following, till chapter XXVI., we pass over as containing nothing new, and being but a tedious rehearsal of former stories.

CHAPTER XXVII.—Moses ordains now that when the children of Israel have crossed the Jordan, six of the tribes should stand upon mount Gerizzim to be blessed, and six should stand upon mount Ebel to be cursed. These unfortunate ones were Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulon, Dan, and Naphtali (v. 13).—Why these six tribes were to be cursed is not explained.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—And it should come to pass that if the children of Israel would listen diligently to the voice of the Lord (to say, the voice of the priest), then the Lord would set them above all nations of the earth, and they would be blessed with great blessings. Blessed would they be in the city; blessed in the field; blessed would be the fruit of their ground, and blessed the fruit of their belly. Blessed would be their basket, and blessed their kneading-trough. Blessed would be their coming in and blessed would be their going out. Yea, the Lord would constitute Israel the head and not the tail, for Israel alone should be uppermost, while all the other nations should be beneath.—Unfortunately for the people of Israel that nothing of all these blessings has befallen them, notwithstanding their listening to the voice of the Lord.—But, says Moses, it shall come to pass, if thou do not listen to the voice of the Lord, that all these curses shall fall upon thee: cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shalt be the fruit of thy body, and cursed the fruit of thy land. The Lord will send against thee misfortune, confusion, and failure in all thy occupations, until thou be destroyed, etc. And the Lord will cause the pestilence to cleave unto thee, etc. The Lord will smite thee with consumption, and with fever, and with inflammation, and with extreme burning, etc. And the heaven above thee shall be copper, and the earth under thee shall be iron. The Lord will pour ashes and dust as rain upon thy land, until thou be destroyed. And thou shalt be smitten before thy enemies, and become an abomination unto all the kingdoms of the earth. And thy carcasses shall become food unto all the fowls of heaven and unto all the

beasts of the earth. The Lord will smite thee with madness, and with blindness, and with confusion. And if thou betroth a wife another shall lie with her, and if thou build a house, another shall dwell therein. Thy ox shall be slain before thy eyes, and another shall eat thereof. Thy sons and daughters shall be taken into captivity, etc., etc.; and many more curses should come over Israel in case they did not listen unto the voice of the Lord.—Now, as Israel never became so glorious a nation as was promised by the Lord, their posterity believe that their forefathers have been disobedient unto the voice of the Lord, and believe themselves to be suffering for it, according to the curse spoken in this chapter. Also the Christians believe the Jews to be under the curse, and that because they did not mind the voice of the Christian Lord, Jesus, and accordingly they consider this chapter as a very striking prophecy of the present condition of the Jews, they even point to it as a proof of the truthfulness of the scripture. They are the more ready to see a prophecy in this, because v. 37 says: "And thou shalt become an abomination, a proverb and a by-word, among all the nations whither the Lord will lead thee." Further, v. 64, says: "And the Lord will scatter thee among all the nations, etc." These sentences now make the prophecy complete, according to the views of the Christians, for they neglect entirely to consider that nothing of all this series of curses, pronounced here (from v. 15-67) ever has occurred, save the scattering among the other nations. About this being scattered, (which by-the-by is in contradiction with their being destroyed, as also threatened here), we might observe that Moses, having succeeded in making the Hebrews a people which looked with contempt upon all other nations, and whose bigotry would not allow them to intermarry with them, must easily have understood that, though Israel might be repulsed from the land of Canaan, they still would remain, for some time, a separate people, distinct of the others, on account of their peculiar religion. It was not necessary to be a great prophet to foretell such a thing. So too, as for foresaying that they would be an astonishment to the other nations, no great prophetic capability was required neither; for it is plain that it would appear very odd to the other nations to see the Israelites consider themselves to be holier creatures, and peculiarly loved by God, while they were repulsed from the land they wished to conquer and while working as slaves under the yoke of their so-called enemies. The oddity of such nation must make them an astonishment and a by-word. This prophecy of their being scattered and being an astonishment is thus merely a result of the sharp-sightedness of Moses, but is not of divine origin. If it was of divine origin, all the rest of the curses ought to have been fulfilled just as well which we know has not been the case.

CHAPTER XXIX.—What Moses spoke in the former chapters he calls the words of the covenant and he exhorts the people to keep them, so that they may prosper. They are all standing this day, he says, before the Lord, that they should enter into the covenant of the Lord their God, and into his oath, which the Lord their God made with them this day; in order to raise them this

day unto himself for a people (v. 9-11).—As the Lord had already made a covenant with the people shortly after their flight from Egypt, this one was a second one. The making of covenants appears to have been quite different in those days of what it is now ; for now-a-days the different parties must agree by mutual consent to the conditions, while here it was the Lord alone who made it, and desired that the others should keep it, without ever having asked if the Israelites agreed to its stipulations. This mode of acting of the Lord was arbitrary, and cannot have been very pleasant for his chosen people, though on the other hand it must have been a great honor for Israel to obtain in this way a special God of their own.

CHAPTER XXX.—And it shall happen when all these things have come upon Israel, the blessings and the curses, then will they reflect upon it in their heart, and return unto the Lord their God. And the Lord will have mercy on them, and restore them from captivity, gathering them together, to bring them back once more to the blessed land of milk and honey ; and take away their curse, in order to place it upon the head of those that hate them.—This benevolent intention of the Lord was worthy of so good-natured a God ; for, we see, if the Israelites should ever desert the service of this good God, he promised them, beforehand, to have finally mercy on them, though they might not have obeyed his voice. Only one thing is there that lessens a little the hope of seeing the promise fulfilled, namely, the Lord said in chapter XXVIII : 68, that he shall finally send the children of Israel by ship into Egypt, and there procure to sell them as slaves, and as this is not consistent with what he promises, it is plain he imposes upon his children.—The idea that the Israelites shall return into the promised land is yet alive among them, based upon this chapter, until, now, however, the prophecy has not been fulfilled ; and if we consider that the Israelites themselves have not likely the wish to settle in the barren land of Judea, but rather prefer to do commercial business in large cities to being there, we may rest quite assured that they never will be reunited again into that desirable land ; but gradually will get mixed with the other nations.

CHAPTER XXXI.—Moses now tells us that he is 120 years old, and that it is time for him to die. Before starting off he exhorted the children of Israel not to be afraid when crossing the Jordan, for the Lord himself would destroy their enemies. He thereupon went into the tabernacle where the Lord came, in order to take leave of him, saying, it was now time for Moses to go to sleep with his fathers.—For the Mosaic Lord believed not in a life hereafter, as we often had occasion to observe.

CHAPTER XXXII.—Moses after taking leave of the Lord, sang his last song, which we here find recorded. It is a little prolix, but taking into consideration that old folks are often prolix, we must not mind this, but only admire the beau-

tiful ideas it conveys. The song seems to have served as a model for the songs which king David composed, and which are known to us under the name of Psalms.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—After the song Moses spoke a blessing, wherewith he blessed the children of Israel. The blessing was spoken in about the same lofty style as the song, and the contents of it is so full of profound wisdom that the children of Israel might study over it as long as they pleased without ever finding out the bottom of it. The only tribe to which Moses spoke in a more intelligible way, was the tribe of Levi, namely, he said of Levi: (we take here the words of the Jewish bible): “Thy thummim and thy urim are with thy holy man, whom thou didst try at Massah, and with whom thou didst wrestle at the waters of Merihah; who said of his father and of his mother, I have not seen them; and who did not acknowledge his brothers, nor regard his own children; for they mind thy word and thy covenant they keep” (v. 8, 9).—Seeing that the Hebrew words of ‘thummim’ and ‘urim’ mean ‘light’ and ‘excellence,’ we have to read, “let thy light and thy excellence remain with thy holy man.” The holy men were the Levites themselves; Moses wished them to keep for themselves the superior knowledge. For, since he says “thy light and thy excellence,” it appears from these words that the Levites had received greater light in matters of the Mosai-cal religion than the rest of the people. And, as Moses did never speak of this preliminary, we have to infer that this light (or knowledge) was kept a secret among them. Now, before parting from the Levites, Moses thought it useful to exhort them once for all never to reveal this secret to any one but a Levite, and only to trust those whom they had tried with all kinds of trials, and whom had shown to be disposed rather to deny their father and mother, and even their own children, than to break their oath of secrecy; as such ones alone were worthy to be trusted with their covenant. The word of ‘covenant’ which Moses used here, also shows that a covenant existed between the Levites, and this covenant proves to have been a secret by the mysterious way he speaks of it. The correctness of our former supposition that the Levites were the assistants of Moses, and were acquainted with the mysteries of his religion, is pretty evident from this chapter.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—Finally Moses announces that he went up unto the mount of Nebo, from the top of which the Lord showed him the promised land of milk and honey, saying: “but thither shalt thou not go.” Moses the servant of God died thereupon. And the Lord buried him in the valley of Moab, but no man ever found his tomb. Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyes were not dimmed, and his natural strength had not abated.—This powerful old age shows us again that Moses had enjoyed an uncommon protection by the Lord, but, though his bodily strength had not abated, still we have good reason to suppose that his memory must have considerably diminished, and made him commit an error as to the year of his birth, for a man who has led such an

active and exciting life is not likely to have possessed his full strength at so old an age as Moses names. He must have been much younger ; but it of course adds to the respect due to a great prophet if he be of an uncommonly old age. It is also interesting to notice from this page that Moses himself wrote that he died. He thus wrote after his death. It could be though that Joshua his successor, wrote this last chapter for him ; and we should not be surprised if Joshua had written the whole book of the Deuteronomy, save the three chapters preceding the last, which may originally have made part of the book called Numbers. The reason why we suppose this book to be written by another than Moses, is because the style of writing differs greatly from that of the other books, and because Moses told us already in the previous one that he was ordered to die on the mount.

The children of Israel mourned for Moses thirty days. And Joshua the son of Nun, a man full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hand upon him, took up the leadership of the people, and the children of Israel hearkened unto him ; yet there never arose in Israel a prophet who, as Moses, knew the Lord face to face, and who was equal to him in respect to his mighty hand and terrific deeds (v. 10-12).—Still the Christians believe that their Jesus has been a still greater man than Moses was.—As to the death of Moses, the circumstance that his tomb was never found, would cause us to suggest, that Moses probably was not yet in a hurry to die, and descending the mount on the other side, before the Lord came up to put him to death, has avoided that doom, and has travelled until he reached Egypt, or some other civilized country, where he could rest in peace of all his work, and enjoy the earning of his labor. We suppose this explanation to hold good at all events.

**To what conclusion we come in respect to Moses, after
a thorough investigation of the five first books of
the bible.**

Moses, the well-known leader of the Israelites, was born according to the calculation of some historians, in the year 3309, and according to others in the year 3467 B. C., in the northern part of Egypt, in the little kingdom of the (in the bible mentioned) Pharaohs. This kingdom seems to have been situated on the east bank of the river Nile, opposite the place where in later times the city of Memphis was built. The capital of this kingdom, and perhaps the only city of the kingdom, was, according to the supposition of some, the very ancient city of Babylon, on the Nile. The inhabitants of this kingdom, called in the bible by the general name of Egyptians, had, as was the case with all nations of that period, a number of servants, who invariably were slaves, since no other condition was known at that time than

that of master and slave. The slaves were originally gotten by taking prisoners of war, but as they begat children, the children also grew up in slavery.


The land of Egypt very likely, as is yet the case at the present time with the whole northern part of Africa, was often visited during the summer seasons by nomadic tribes, who came up from the interior of Africa to seek refuge from the heat and sell their products, to take in return grain and other northern products, wherewith to return back to their southern homes. These nomadic tribes belong almost all to the race of moors (not to be confounded with negroes). In the interior of Africa there exist tribes of moors, whose languages has much resemblance to the Hebrew tongue, even many words entirely the same, as Dr. Livingstone, the english missionary writes. That the tribes passing through the kingdom of the Pharaohs have sometimes come to a fight with the inhabitants, we may take for granted, since we know that the human race has always been fond of fighting. On such occasions the Egyptians have certainly not let pass the chance of providing themselves with slaves, seeing that a slave represents a value, and that man has always been anxious to accumulate wealth. Considering all these points, it leads us to presume that the Egyptian slaves had their first origin from various nations, and principally from Moorish tribes. To this supposition we must adhere still more, when we learn that in that period the whole population of North-Africa save the Egyptians, consisted of Moorish tribes. A race of slaves will lose however in the course of time to a great extent the external features of their original race, by a crossing with the race of their masters; this is a fact which is unmistakably visible in countries where slavery still exist; the late Egyptian slaves therefore have in all probability consisted in a mongrel race of Moorish and Egyptian descent. They were called Hebrews, which seems to have meant "slaves" in the old Egyptian language.

A man of the name of Moses, who had been brought up in the house of a Hebrew family at the expense of a daughter of the king, who adopted him as her son, (probably she had good reason for it, as the clandestine manner in which she reared him, leads to the supposition that if the child was her's, it was an illegitimate one,) conceived the notion that it would be a fine thing to free the slaves, by creating insurrection among them, and place himself at the head of this people, so that he might govern as king. He tried to incite them into insurrection, giving the example by killing an Egyptian, because he chastised his slave. The king however having heard of it sent his men to apprehend him, in consequence of which Moses had to flee from the country. He fled into the wilderness of Arab on the other side of the defile of Suez. There he came into the house of a priest and married his daughter. He seems to have lived with his father-in-law for some time, keeping the flocks. Though now the keeping of flocks is an useful occupation, still it was no work to please Moses long, for he, being ambitious, would have preferred to rule over men instead of over sheep; the result of this was that he often pondered over the best manner of carrying out his once conceived notion of making the Egyptian slaves a people by themselves. He came to the conclusion that the best way would be, first, to make them be-

lieve that they were all descendants of one family so as to create a feeling of brother-hood amongst them, and then to entice them out of the land of Egypt by some means or other. Moses, accordingly, wrote down a sort of a novel, mixing it with some current legend, wherein he told the story of a man named Abraham, who was an intimate friend of some very mighty lord; this mighty lord was the very same great man who had made the world and every thing thereon; now this lord promised his friend he would make his descendants a great and glorious nation, he would also give them luxuriant lands to possess, a land of milk and honey, and would be a god, or a guardian, unto them, to bless them and to protect them against all evil. The descendants of this happy man Abraham, had on account of a famine in the happy land, removed from there into Egypt, where they had at first been greatly respected, but by some unfortunate juncture of circumstances had by degrees sunk into slavery. The mighty lord, who for a time had forgotten them, now hearing their crying, and discovering they had to do hard labour in mortar and brick, suddenly remembered all his precious promises unto Abraham and resolved to make good his word. He therefore called on Moses to ask his assistance; and to send him unto the king of Egypt, to command him to let the Hebrews go for three days, in order to offer unto the lord, their God, who was in the wilderness awaiting them.—Moses having finished this novel, to which he added a book of laws, and a book of ordinances regarding the offerings, returned into Egypt, where he visited Aaron, his foster-brother, and some trusted Hebrews, who might be willing to assist him in carrying out his scheme. The story of the great lord and his intimate friend Abraham was circulated among the slaves. The promise of a land of milk and honey, where they would have plenty, without labour; and the assurance that the great lord, who so fondly loved them, awaited them on the other side of the red-sea, was, of course, favorably received by the Hebrews, who being slaves, had not sufficient education to see the cheat, nor had they much to jeopardise. Moses thought, if he should succeed in getting the slaves out of Egypt, he would lead them towards the best part of Syria, (called coele (happy) Syria), and conquer the land, taking it by surprise. Once in that land he would take his seat on a throne, ruling at the same time as priest and as king. He would teach the people the existence of a revenging God (in plain words, a bug-bear), whose minister he would be, and this God should be the mightiest of all gods, and be the special God of Israel; in this way the people should fear the priests and cultivate a strong feeling of unity among themselves, but treat with contempt all other nations. The power of such a priestly king would be very great, and could satisfy the ambition of the most ambitious of men.—The God which Moses' imagination brought forth was a sort of human being, with the difference that he was much more powerful than common man, and possessed of an everlasting life. The name he gave him was that of "Lord," probably to show that he was the lord among the gods—for Moses did not repute the existence of other gods, as can be seen from Gen. I: 26 and Gen. III: 22.—Seeing now that to govern the people with success, the priestly king would want assistance, Moses

selected a number of men, calling them Levites, to whom he communicated under oath of secrecy his intentions and priestly secrets, (gotten from his father-in-law), organizing them into a mysterious society. The tradition of their secrets formed in latter days the cabal or mystic science of the rabbins. It were also the Levites who probably assisted Moses in the execution of the Egyptian plagues and other miraculous performances.—Moses, thus prepared, with a story about a god and a patriarch, and with a law-book, and with miracles, and with a number of assistants, bound to him by a most terrible oath, undertook to set the rebellion of the Egyptian slaves on foot, and if they should not rise from their own free will, he would make them do so by means of miraculous performances, and induce them to follow him. The miracle-performance was a common occurrence among Egyptian priests or magicians. Once out of the land he should lead them to coele-Syria, and though they might object, observing that they did not see the great lord who was awaiting them, again he should compel them by force of miracles to go and invade the land, killing the unsuspecting inhabitants and taking possession of their dwellings and fields.—This grand plan of Moses did however but partly succeed, for if he succeeded by a number of tricks and crimes in al-luring the Egyptian slaves away from their masters, he never succeeded in getting possession of the coveted land of happy Syria ; nor did he reign as king and as priest in the manner as he hoped to do. After some years wandering in the wilderness without being able to conquer any habitable land, being repulsed everywhere, Moses at last gave up his plans ; he named Joshua his successor, and giving out that the Lord had ordained him to die on the mount, he went up on some mountain, descending again on the other side, and made his way towards Egypt, or some other civilized country, where he could spend in ease all the gold and silver the children of Israel had stolen from Egypt, and brought unto the tabernacle, and which he Moses most probably had caused to be carried off and deposited in a safe place, in care of his friend and foster-brother Aaron, who left the camp some time previous.

Though now Moses seems to have been almost an infernal being, at least as we would judge of his character, still in one thing he is to admire, namely, in his never failing energy and perseverance ; for nothing was able to discourage him in his efforts ultimately to accomplish his plans, using any means in his reach ; it was only after years of fruitless endeavours, when he saw the total impossibility of conquering the land he coveted, that he gave up the idea of persevering any longer. Had Moses succeeded he would have extended, as is to be seen from the promises of his Lord, his priestly kingdom from the Nile unto the Euphrates, and would have reigned over all the then civilized nations. Fortunately though for the world he did not succeed, for his domination would have been one of priestly tyranny and bigotry, crushing out all free thoughts and noble feelings of the human nature, merely for the end of affording the priests a life of luxury at the expenses of the masses. The catholicism of the middle-ages, when the pope was considered the absolute ruler over the souls and bodies of all nations and individuals, was an imitation of the reign Moses intended to have, and was a reign entirely based upon his principles—but



it has not been as strong as his would have been, since the dominion of the pope had not as strong a basis to prove its godly installation, as would have been the case with a dominion of Mosaical popes, or successors of Moses. Fortunately, however, Providence has not allowed such usurpers to trample under foot all the good what exists in humanity, so that the human race has been at liberty to improve; while under the Mosaical reign, it would have gotten totally depraved and have become nearly equal to the brutes.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

CHAPTER I.—And it happened after the death of Moses that the Lord spoke unto Joshua, the minister of Moses, saying : Moses my servant is dead, now therefore arise, pass over this Jordan, thou and all the people. Every place that the sole of thy foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto You. From the wilderness unto the Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hettites, and unto the great sea towards the west, shall be yours (v. 1-4).—See about the extent of the land of the Israelite our remarks in Levit. XXXIV.

CHAPTER II.—Joshua sent out two spies to reconnoitre the land, in particular the town of Jericho. The spies went into that place, and they, deeming it proper, to unite the agreeable to the useful, stopped over night in a brothel. The king of Jericho being informed of the circumstance, sent to Rachab, the mistress of the brothel, with inquiries after these men. Rachab hid forthwith the spies under a pile of straw, and said, the men were gone long since. In the course of the night she let them down by a rope from the window, for her house stood on the town wall; and thus, the godly spies escaped.

CHAPTER III.—The children of Israel marched up towards Jericho; the ark of the Lord of all the earth, (the Lord got this pompous title since Joshua's election,) was carried in front of the army by the Levites. The people were not allowed to approach it nearer than at a distance of 2000 cubits (3000 feet), they were further ordered to sanctify themselves, for the Lord was going to do wonders which should make Joshua great in the eyes of all Israel. And lo, it came to pass, that, when the Levites stood on the margin of the Jordan, the waters which came down stopped at once and stood like a wall, so that the ark and subsequently the whole army crossed the river, quite dry.—This great wonder which was intended to make Joshua great, may however have been performed in a very simple manner, for, the Jordan, as is known, is but a small rivulet and in some places very shallow, so that the Levites who were ahead of

the army could easily have thrown up a dam to keep back the water which came down. The more readily they could do so if they have chosen a spot where the river made a fork, so as to let off the water the other way. The army crossing the river at some distance of the dam, could of course, not see the cause of the miracle.

CHAPTER IV.—The children of Israel having crossed the river erected a monument of twelve stones; and Joshua was now great in the eyes of all Israel, and they feared him as they had feared Moses all the days of his life (v. 14.)

CHAPTER V.—And it came to pass when all the kings of the Amorites and all the kings of the Canaanites heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan to let the children of Israel pass, that their heart melted away, and there remained no more courage within them.—During the time of Moses, we were informed that the Amorites were entirely destroyed, so that none of them remained, but now we see, they got still a melting heart.—And it happened one of these days that Joshua took a walk in the neighborhood of Jericho, and behold, while being near the city, suddenly a man with a sword in his hand, stood before him; Joshua said, "art thou for us or for our adversaries?" "No," said he, "I am the captain of the host of the Lord, and now I am come." Joshua hearing this, fell on his face, saying: "what doth my Lord speak unto thy servant." The celestial captain thereupon said: "take off thy shoes, for the place where thou standest is holy." Joshua forthwith took off his shoes.

CHAPTER VI.—Now Jericho was shut up and barred up, because of the children of Israel; no one went in and no one came out. The Lord then ordered Joshua that all the warriors should march around the city once a day, during six days, and the seventh day they should compass the city seven times, blowing the cornets. And it should happen that at the moment, they should blow a last long blast, and all the army should ejaculate a great shout, the walls of the city should fall down, so that the children should have but to enter the city. The miracle happened as the Lord had spoken, and all inhabitants of Jericho, old, young, male and female were slain, except Rachab the whore; and the city, after being pillaged, was set on fire. And all the gold and silver and all the vessels of copper, etc, which were taken, were brought unto the treasury of the Lord, as these things were holy unto the Lord.—Already in Levit. X and Numb. XVI we expressed our opinion that Moses and his assistants must have known the use of gunpowder or some stuff similar to it, and seeing that by this miracle the walls cannot have come down by the mere sound of the trumpets, we feel still more assured that the gunpowder was known. During the seven days that Joshua kept the inhabitants barred up in town by a display of his army, he probably set his Levites at work to undermine the walls and place powder underneath them. At a given signal a light was applied to the powder and the walls stumbled down. It was a monk who in later days is said to have invented

the powder, but who knows if he has not disclosed some old secret, kept by the priesthood; who inherited their secrets from the ancient priests of Rome and of Greece, and they again of Egypt.

CHAPTER VII.—An attack on the town of the name of Ai was now undertaken, but not with as fortunate a result as on Jericho, for this time the children of Israel were repulsed. They wept and put dust upon their heads. The Lord then said they were beaten this time, because some among them had kept for themselves of the devoted things (gold and silver) of Jericho. Joshua therefore should examine by means of a touching-process, who was the transgressor, and such should be burnt alive; after this execution the wrath of the Lord should be appeased. The unfortunate man, who was touched, was Achan; he had hidden fifty shekels of gold; the gold was taken away from him for the Lord, and the man with all his family was burnt alive, so that the Lord was appeased.

CHAPTER VIII.—The city of Ai was now taken by means of a stratagem which was invented by the Lord himself.

CHAPTER IX.—The cities of the Amorites and Canaanites made an alliance against Israel; they also sent spies, who at first were not discovered but afterwards were.

CHAPTER X.—The city of Gibeon, whence the spies came, made peace with Israel. The other cities of the Amorites, on that account, joined their forces against Gibeon, so that she sent for help to Joshua. Joshua sent his army and overtook the enemy unexpectedly, in consequence of which they fled in great confusion, and it happened that while they were flying through the pass of Bethchoron, the Lord smote them with big rocks from heaven, and more died of the rocks than of the sword.—Probably these projectiles, instead of coming from heaven, came from the rocks of Bethchoron, where the Levites will have assisted the Lord in throwing the stones.—Joshua deemed this day of victory and revenge too short for Israel, and he therefore ordered the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon to stand still in the valley of Ayalon, for twenty-four hours. The sun and the moon obeyed him immediately, so that, as Joshua says (v. 14), there was never a day like this, neither before, nor after that the Lord listened unto the voice of man.—That there was never a day that the Mosaic Lord listened unto the voice of man, is quite possible, but that the sun and moon would have stood still is quite impossible, since the whole starry firmament would have gotten into a general disorder, in case sun and moon had obeyed Joshua; for the course of every one of the celestial globes depends on that of others, on account of their mutual attraction, so that if the course of one (especially of such a principal one as the sun) should have been stopped, it would have caused the greatest confusion in the whole system. That the moon may have shone uncommonly clear during that memorable night, and that

some drunken hero may have thought her to be the sun, would have been no miracle. The same hero may have also taken some lightfire, or some fire-signal kept burning on a hill, for the rising moon; or perhaps he saw the moon double.

CHAPTER XI.—A large number of kings joined against Israel, but the Lord said to Joshua: "be not afraid, for to morrow I give them all up to be slain by Israel." And Israel slew them all and killed every one of them, as Moses had ordained, and all the spoil of the cities did the children of Israel take as booty. All the countries between the mountain of Seir and the valley of Lebanon, were taken by Joshua. He also cut off the Anakins, and utterly destroyed them.—We will soon have an opportunity to discover that though here is said, all the countries between Seir and the Lebanon were taken, and the inhabitants destroyed, this was not the case. In the same way we are told here the Anakins were utterly destroyed by Joshua, but unfortunately we read in Deut. II that these mighty giants were already utterly destroyed at the time of Moses.

CHAPTER XII.—Joshua enumerates now the name of all the kingdoms he took possession of; their number was 31. The most principal were: The kingdom of Jericho, consisting of one city. The kingdom of Ai, consisting of one city. The kingdom of Jerusalem, consisting of one city. The kingdom of Hebron, consisting of one. The kingdom of Yarmuth, consisting of one; and so forth, thirty-one cities representing thirty-one kingdoms.—We may imagine what important kingdoms they were; all of them were situated on the west side of the Jordan, (according to v. 7.) The Jordan is about 24 geogr. miles in length. Now taking the land from the west side of the Jordan half way unto the Mediterranean sea, (further we cannot take it since we know that the sea-coast was inhabited by the Philistines, with whom the Israelites had not yet been in war,) then we discover that the space, wherein all these 31 kingdoms were situated, can have been of about 150 geogr. square miles. The dominion of each of these kingdoms can, consequently, not have been very great. Why then should we wonder if forty thousand armed men, ready for war, and having passed review before the Lord, (as appears from Joshua IV: 13,) should have conquered by surprise thirty-one kingdoms (or in plain words thirty-one villages) and have performed such galant deeds as slaughtering women and children. We can not at all wonder at it; for they fought with the aid of the Lord.

CHAPTER XIII.—The Lord said unto Joshua, that because he (Joshua) was getting old, stricken by the weight of years, he should divide the land among the tribes of Israel, without trying any further to drive the inhabitants out of it. Joshua divided the land, and the tribes went all to the countries assigned to them; but were obliged to live in the midst of the other inhabitants.—We see that, though, Joshua first told us that he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants from the Lebanon till Seir, there remained yet many of them in the country.

CHAPTER XIV.—Nine and a half tribe occupied the land on the west side of the Jordan, while two and a half tribe took possession of the land on the north-east side of the Jordan. Caleb, a faithful spy, received the mountain of Hebron as his individual share for his services, yet he himself had to destroy the Anakites who held possession of the mountain.—Strange to say, but the Anakites were already twice utterly destroyed, (in Deut. II and in Joshua XI,) but, as we see, every time they make their appearance again. They possessed, we guess, the nine lives of the cat.

CHAPTER XV.—The land on the west side of the salt sea was divided unto Judah, from the bay of that sea till the uttermost southern boundaries to the river of Egypt.—Those who are acquainted with the Jewish history will know that the tribe of Judah never got possession of a tract of land as here described; their boundaries never reached unto the river of Egypt, but were limited to the country of Judea, which was a plot of ground of scarcely a hundred square geog. miles. And yet this has been the only piece of land, of the whole territory promised, which ever was actually in possession of any of the twelve tribes; we will see in Judges I: 27-36. that the other tribes got homesteads which were never conquered. They had to dwell between the towns of the old inhabitants, who have always looked upon the tribes as intruders.—Joshua enumerates further a large number of cities which he holds out as now belonging to Judah. It is, however, more likely that they belonged to the Jebusites, the original inhabitants. Even Jerusalem, which Joshua named in chapter XII among the conquered and destroyed cities, he now confesses to belong still to the Jebusites; for he says: "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, these the children of Israel could not drive out, but the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Judah at Jerusalem even unto this day" (v. 63).

CHAPTER XVI.—The children of Joseph got their inheritance to the north of the children of Judah. The tribe of Ephraim got the territory from Thapnuch until the brook Kanah. They drove, however, not out the Canaanites that dwelt in the land; but the Canaanites dwelt with the Ephraimites until this day (v. 10).—It appears the hornets had not come which were expected to drive out the Canaanites.

CHAPTER XVII.—The tribe of Manasseh got several lots of ground more than the tribe of Ephraim, because Manasseh had been Joseph's first born; still the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of these cities, for the Canaanites continued to dwell in the land (v. 12).

CHAPTER XVIII.—Joshua sent thereafter three spies to find out which land more would be suitable for the remainder of the tribes who had not got an inheritance yet. They went out and returned, giving a description of the land

they had seen ; thereupon Joshua assigned it unto the other tribes ; who, of course, had to look out for themselves how to get it.

CHAPTER XIX.—In this chapter Joshua enumerates the large cities situated in the inheritances of the different tribes.—Seeing, however, that none of these cities were taken by the Israelites, these imaginary possessions could not be of any use to them, unless they wished to do like some fantastical philosopher in Athens, who, in order to console himself for his poverty, took occasionally a walk along the harbor, imagining all the ships he saw to be his ; so also the Israelites could walk along the cities, consoling themselves that they were theirs.

CHAPTER XX.—The Lord ordered the construction of three cities of refuge for murderers ; Joshua selected their place on the east side of the Jordan.

CHAPTER XXI.—To the tribe of Levi were given forty-eight cities, with open spaces of ground, as pasture for their cattle.—Of these cities we never afterwards hear anything.—Joshua further says : And the Lord gave rest to all around, just as he had sworn unto the fathers, and there was wanting nothing of all the good things which the Lord had spoken of unto the house of Israel ; it all happened as he had said.—This is well spoken on the part of Joshua, becoming to a servant of the Lord, still we may observe in Judge I : 27–36, that there were wanting a great many things. Besides, the children of Israel never found a land of milk and honey, and never saw the hornets which should come to destroy their neighbors.

CHAPTER XXII.—The children of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh got an inheritance on the east side of the Jordan ; as they crossed the Jordan they built up an altar as a memorial of the event, and this so greatly vexed the other tribes that they had nearly engaged in war.

CHAPTER XXIII.—Now Joshua communicates in an elegant speech his intention to die, and at the same time warns his people against marriages with persons of another nation.

CHAPTER XXIV.—Joshua having assembled all the elders of Israel unto Shechem, spoke to them about all the great things the Lord had done for Israel, and gave them the choice to choose another god. They, though, refused to accept of any other god but the Lord, whereupon Joshua ordered them to put aside their strange gods. And it happened after these things that Joshua, the son of Nun, died, 119 years old ; and they buried him on the mountain of Ephraim. At the same time with him, Eleazar, the son of Aaron, died also, and they buried him on the hill of Pinehas.—If Joshua and Eleazar went to pay a visit to Moses and Aaron, we could not tell, but suppose so, seeing that such worthies ought to join in companionship.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

CHAPTER I.—And it happened after the death of Joshua that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying : “ who shall go up for us against the Canaanites to fight them,” and the Lord said “ Judah shall go up.”—In what manner the Lord could say so, is not plain seeing that Moses and Joshua now being dead, the Lord had no one to do the talking for him.—Judah assisted by the tribe of Simeon went up and defeated the Canaanites, ten thousand men strong, and they caught the king of Bezek and cut off his thumbs and great toes. The children of Judah fought also against Jerusalem and captured it, they smote it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire (v. 8).—This fire seems, however, not to have destroyed the city, as we read in v. 21 : “ And the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem, the children of Benjamin did not drive out, but the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem until this day.” (In Joshua XV : 63, is said, instead of children of Benjamin, children of Judah).—The tribe of Ephraim went also up to take possession of its inheritance, and succeeded in taking the town of Bethel by treason. The other tribes, were not as fortunate in their conquests, for we read : Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-sheam and its towns, etc., for the Canaanites remained in the land (v. 27). Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezar ; so that the Canaanites dwelt in the midst of them in Gezar (v. 29). Zebulon did not drive out the inhabitants of Ketron (v. 30). Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Akko, etc., and the Asherites dwelt in the midst of the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land (v. 31, 32). Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethsemech, etc., but dwelt in the midst of the Canaanites (v. 33). And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not suffer them to come down into the valley (v. 34).—The land of milk and honey was consequently not so easily to be taken possession of as we might have expected from all the previous promises of the mighty God of Israel.

CHAPTER II.—After the death of Joshua and the elders of Moses' time, the children of Israel began to forget the Lord their God, and did what is evil in the eyes of the Lord, namely they served the God Baal.

CHAPTER III.—In order to educate the children of Israel for the science of war, the Lord left among them five kings of the Philistines, besides the Canaanites, and Zidonians, and Hivites, and Hittites, and Amorites, and Perisites, and Jebusites ; but the children of Israel took their daughters unto themselves for wives, and their daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods. Thus the children of Israel did the evil before the eyes of the Lord ; therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hands

of the king of Mesopotamy, and they served him eight years. Then Othniel came up and delivered Israel, so that they had forty years rest ; but the children of Israel again did the evil before the eyes of the Lord, and the Lord strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab, against Israel, and they served Eglon eighteen years. Then the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, and the Lord sent them a deliverer, that was Ehud, a man who was left-handed. And Ehud made himself a sword and girded it under his garment, and brought a present unto Eglon the king. Now Eglon was very fat, and Ehud standing before him said he had a secret to tell him, (a word of God he called it), in consequence of which Eglon sent away his men : but behold, scarcely were the men gone, or Ehud, drawing his sword, thrust it into Eglon's body, so that the handle went in after the blade the fat closing upon it, and the dirt came out (v. 20-22). And Ehud blew on the cornet and assembled all the children of Israel, saying : the Lord hath delivered into your hands your enemies the Moabites. And they went down after him, and slew ten thousand men, all lusty men of valor, and there escaped none. And the land had rest eighty years.

CHAPTER IV.—And the children of Israel did again the evil before the eyes of the Lord, after the death of Ehud. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Yabin, the king of the Canaanites. The captain of his army was Sissera. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, for the king had nine hundred iron chariots and oppressed the children of Israel during twenty years. Deborah, a prophetess, ruled the children of Israel at that time, and she sent for Barak and said unto him : “the Lord hath commanded thee to go and to lead on towards Thabas ten thousand men.” And Barak said “If thou wilt go with me then I will go.” And she said “I will go indeed, for it is not for thy honor thou goest on the way.” The army of ten thousand men went up and surprised the army of Sissera, and the Lord confounded Sissera and all his chariots, and Sissera alighting from his chariot, fled on foot. Sissera fled to the tent of Jael, the wife of a Kenite, and he said unto her : give me to drink, I pray thee ; and she gave him to drink milk and water, and covered him with a blanket. The captain then thinking himself in a safe place went asleep ; but lo, while he was sleeping, Jael approached him and with a hammer struck a nail through his temples, so that his head became fastened into the ground ; thus Sissera, while he was fast asleep and weary, died (v. 21). And so did God humble on that day Yabin, the king of Canaan, before the children of Israel (v. 23).—The Lord made, as it appears by preference, use of treacherous acts to deliver his beloved children. The nail which Mrs. Jael used might have been kept as a curiosity, as well to show by what means the Lord humbled the Canaanites, as to show how long the nails were they used in those days. A pity, indeed, they did not save this one, not only for curiosity's sake, but also for the edification of posterity.

CHAPTER V.—The hymn sung by Deborah and Barak on this memorable day of victory is recorded here. It is an interesting piece of poetry, by which

Deborah praises herself in high-soaring words, and also declares that Jael, the murderess, ought to be blessed above all women ; while the mother of Sissera because she wept over her son, is sneered at without any compassion.—Under Deborah the land had forty years rest.

CHAPTER VI.—And the children of Israel did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of Midian for seven years. And it came to pass as the children of Israel cried unto the Lord that the Lord sent a deliverer unto them ; namely an angel of the Lord came down appearing unto Gideon, a young man who was threshing wheat, and said unto him : “The Lord is with thee, thy mighty man of valor, etc. ; . . . and the Lord says : because I will be with thee thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.” Gideon requested a sign to convince him of the truth of the angel’s statement ; and, leaving the angel alone for awhile (probably to give him time to consider his request), he went and roasted a kid and baked some cakes, which he brought unto the angel. The angel ordered him to place those meals upon a rock, which Gideon did, but lo, the angel touching the meal with his staff, consumed them with fire, and disappeared at the same time. Gideon was now fully convinced that he had seen an angel of the Lord. Yet he desired another token of the Lord, with a fleece of wool, which should be dry, while the ground around should be moist with dew. This miracle took place ; Gideon, however, not yet convinced, desired the miracle should take place once more in an opposite manner, namely, the fleece should be moist and the ground dry. This also came to pass, and Gideon at last was satisfied.

CHAPTER VII.—Gideon and all the people with him rose up early in the morning, and encamped by the spring of Charod. And the Lord said unto Gideon he should not take too large an army with him, for Israel should boast of having themselves beaten the Midianites ; he should therefore give leave to return home to who were fearful. Twenty thousand returned, and ten thousand remained with him. These men were yet too many, said the Lord ; Gideon should only take those men from among them, who, when drinking at the spring, should lap the water after the manner of the dogs. Three hundred of the men proved to drink like dogs, and only these were deemed worthy soldiers. Gideon gave them each a cornet, an empty pitcher, and a torch, and thus equipped, he caused his men to creep during the night into the camp of the Midianites ; where of a sudden they began shattering the pitchers, while sounding their cornets, and brandishing their torches. This stratagem brought great consternation among the Midianites, who thinking to be surprised by a large force, fought against each other ; so that Gideon, by advancing with his ten thousand men, which he had kept in the arrear, had no trouble to defeat the disordered and confused army of Midian. He also made prisoner two of their chiefs, one of whom he crushed flat against a rock, while he squeezed the other one in a wine-press.

CHAPTER VIII.—Gideon with his three hundred valiant warriors crossed the Jordan in pursuit of two other Midianite kings. Coming by the city of Succoth, he desired victuals for his followers, which the city refused. Gideon then threatened that he would whip their flesh with thorns. From there he went to the city of Penuel, demanding the same, but these inhabitants refused also to comply with his request, notwithstanding Gideon threatened that he would pull down their tower. Soon after this Gideon reached the army of the Midianites, being fifteen thousand strong, but with his three hundred he slew them all immediately and captured the kings. Then returning to Succoth he whipped the elders of that city with thorns, and broke down the tower of Penuel. The two captured kings were treacherously stabbed by Gideon himself, and robbed of their golden ornaments. The people of Israel were now greatly delighted with Gideon, and elected him for their king, but the disinterested Gideon declined to accept this honor, saying that he were satisfied with a reward of the golden ear-rings which were taken from the Midianites. And the weight of the gold they brought him was a thousand seven hundred shekels. Under him the land had forty years rest.

CHAPTER IX.—Abimelech, one of the seventy sons of Gideon, had taken a different view from that of his father, regarding the royal dignity; thus, after his father's death, he went up to Sichem, and asked the inhabitants whether they wished to be governed by the seventy sons of Gideon or only by one; they preferred to be ruled only by one, and gave him seventy pieces of silver as a mark of their good feelings towards him. With this money he hired seventy idle and reckless men, and followed by them he entered his father's house, killing all his seventy brothers but one, who escaped. Abimelech was now made king, and reigned for three years. After the lapse of this time Yotham, the escaped brother, made his appearance and disputed Abimelech's right. This caused a civil war, in which Abimelech was at first very successful, until he, at the capture of Thabez, while engaged in setting fire to a tower into which the inhabitants had fled, got a millstone thrown upon his head which broke his skull. Abimelech looked up to see who had thrown the millstone, and when perceiving it was a woman, he felt so ashamed that he ordered his armor-bearer to kill him immediately, in order they should not say a woman had slain him.—Abimelech proved to be a man of presence of mind, for not every one, with a broken skull, would have thought as much as he did.

CHAPTER X.—After Abimelech, Thola rose up to deliver Israel, and he ruled over Israel twenty-three years, and then he died. After him arose Yair and ruled over Israel twenty-two years. And he had thirty sons, riding on thirty asses, and they had thirty cities. And the children of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord, they served the gods Balalim and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and of Ammon, and of the Philistines; therefore the Lord sold them unto the hands of the Philistines, for eighteen

years. Then the children of Israel cried unto the Lord and confessed their sins, and as the Lord saw this, his soul was grieved for the trouble of Israel; and the people said "whosoever will fight against Ammon shall be the head of Gilead."

CHAPTER XI.—Now Jephthah, a Gileadite, was a mighty man of valour, he though was the son of a harlot, and had therefore been driven out by his brothers; but when the children of Ammon made war against the children of Israel, the elders sent for him, promising to make him their chief. Jephthah having accepted of their offer, sent messengers to the king of Ammon to inform him that the land of Gilead belonged to Israel, as a present of the Lord, and did not belong to Ammon; this message the king did not understand: therefore, the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, in consequence of which he made a vow that in case the Lord would actually deliver the Ammonites into his hands, he would offer unto the Lord whatsoever should come forth out of the doors of his house to meet him. And it happened that Jephthah defeated the children of Ammon, so that they were humbled before the children of Israel. Jephthah coming back from the battle field, went to his house, and behold, the one that came out from the door, was his own daughter, his only child, who came to meet him with timbrels and dances. When he saw her, he told her his vow, and she as an obedient daughter, complied with his wishes, only asking that two months be granted to her, in order that she might mourn her virginity before departing this world. The two months were granted, and at their expiration, she returned to her father, who fulfilled on her his vow.—The Lord, of course, will have been very much pleased at smelling the sweet savour of burning human flesh, for it was by inspiration of the spirit of the Lord, that Jephthah had made this singular vow.

CHAPTER XII.—The Ephraimites, hearing of Jephthah's victory, came and complained that they had not been called to war against the Ammonites. Jephthah for all reply made an attack upon the Ephraimites, and occupying the passages of the Jordan, let nobody pass, but those who were able to pronounce correctly the word Shibboleth, while those who could not pronounce it were put to death.—It seems that the Ephraimites had a different pronounciation.—In this manner, forty-two thousand men were slaughtered.—Thus we see that the children of Israel not yet satisfied with killing the old inhabitants, wanted yet to kill each other, and by large numbers too.—Jephthah was judge in Israel six years, and then he died. After him came Ibron, who had thirty sons and thirty daughters, which latter ones he exchanged for thirty wives for his sons. He was judge in Israel seven years. Then came Elon, who ruled ten years. After Elon came Abdon, who had forty sons and thirty grand-sons, who rode on seventy asses. He ruled over Israel eight years.

CHAPTER XIII.—The children of Israel did again the evil in the eyes of the Lord, therefore the Lord gave them over into the hands of the Philistines, for

forty years. And there was a certain man of Zorah, whose name was Manoach and his wife was barren and did not bear. And there appeared an angel of the Lord unto the woman, and he said unto her : " behold thou art barren and hast not born, but thou wilt conceive and bear a son, etc." This son should be a Nazarite of God, therefore no razor should come over his head, and he should commence to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. When the woman told her husband about her meeting with the celestial messenger, he prayed the Lord to be allowed to meet him also. The result was that the angel made again his appearance, the next day, while the wife was in the field. She forthwith informed her husband of the fact, and he coming out, held a short conversation with the angel about the education of the child in expectation, and thereupon invited him to partake of a dinner ; at the same time begging him to tell his name. The angel declined the invitation and even refused to give his name. Manoach, however, wishing to do something, took a kid and dressed a meat-offering unto the Lord, upon the rock ; but lo, what happened ! when the flame went up from the altar towards heaven, the angel of the Lord seated himself upon the flame, and in this manner ascended to heaven. Manoach and his wife seeing this miracle fell on their faces. And the woman bore a son, and called his name Samson, and the child grew up and was blessed by the Lord.

CHAPTER XIV.—And Samson saw a daughter of the Philistines and fell in love with her, and he told his parents they should go up to ask her in marriage for him. While his parents and he himself went up to Timnathah (where the damsel lived), Samson was attacked by a lion, but the spirit of the Lord coming suddenly over Samson, made him seize the lion and rend him to pieces as he might have done with a kid. Nothing of this incident was perceived by the parents, to whom Samson did not tell it neither. And it happened when after some days they returned on their way, that Samson discovered a swarm of bees in the carcass of the lion, and honey which they had made ; of this nice honey he made his meal.—The bees of Samson's time seems not to have been so particular in regard to scent as are the present ones, for the latter prefer the scent of flowers to that of a rotting carcass.—When now Samson held his wedding, he got the amusing idea of proposing a riddle to his guests, and he stipulated thereby that in case they should know the answer, he should give them each a new garment, but if they, in the reverse, did not know it in seven days, he should get the same of each of them. The riddle was this : out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. This alluded to the honey in the lion's carcass, but considering that none of the guests knew anything of the killed lion, the riddle was a hard one for them to find the answer of. Still they succeeded in finding it, by prevailing upon the bride to coax the answer out of her husband and tell it to them. Thus Samson lost his bet, and had to give up thirty new garments. To buy them would have been expensive, but fortunately the spirit of the Lord came over him, and he going down to Ashkelon slew thirty

men, robbing them of their apparel, which he brought to his guests, and having done this he left his wife.

CHAPTER XV.—And it happened some time after this that Samson felt a desire to see his wife once more ; accordingly he returned to her, bringing her a young kid for a present.—Samson, as we discover, fancied cheap presents.—When arriving at her fathers house, he was told she had married another. This news aroused his anger very much, and he therefore caught three hundred foxes to whose tails he tied three hundred torches ; and setting fire to them, he sent them off into the standing corn of the Philistines ; which by this means was all burnt up.—Samson thus proves to have been an exceedingly good fox-catcher, and also to have known how to handle those animals, as it will not have been an easy task to tie torches to their tails ; yet we would have advised him to set himself the fire to the corn, instead of taking so much trouble of catching so many foxes and tying their tails.—Then, the Philistines came up and burnt with fire the wife of Samson and her father ; now Samson to punish them for the outrage, gave every Philistine a blow on the hips and one on the thigh, and then went up to the land of Judah. The children of Judah, however, delivered him back again to the Philistines, binding him with new cords. The Philistines seeing him in that state, shouted with delight, but behold, the spirit of the Lord came suddenly over Samson, so that he tore the cords as if they were only flaxen threads, and taking up the jawbone of an ass, he therewith slew, on the spot, thousand men of the Philistines. He did this in almost no time, merely counting, one, two, three, and there they all lay down, a full thousand slain by his holy inspired muscles. The unusual exertion made him thirsty, though, he therefore said to the Lord, he was dying of thirst, and the Lord, evidently not wishing to lose his hero, clove forthwith a hollow in the rock and the water came forth, and Samson drank and felt refreshed, and was judge in Israel twenty years.

CHAPTER XVI.—One day Samson went down to Gazrah, in order to visit a certain harlot. The inhabitants of the place discovering that he was in town, laid all the night in wait at the gates of the city, so as to catch him when returning. Samson though came not out before midnight, and finding the gates locked, took the doorposts with the doors and their bolts upon his shoulder, and peaceably walked off with this load, depositing the same on the top of a mountain. Next after this he fell in love with a woman, whose name was Delila ; now the lords of the Philistines hearing of this, went all to Delila, saying : persuade him and see wherein lieth his strength, and by what means we may overpower him.—Strange enough is it that the lords of the Philistines wished to know wherein his strength was lying, since every living soul would have expected it to lie in his muscles.—Delila after several attempts in vain, in which Samson amused himself with fooling her, at last got the secret. He, namely, disclosed to her confidentially that his strength was lodged in his hair. A strange place for strength, surely, yet as proof of the strength of his hair may serve, that the day

before disclosing the secret, he had told her that in case she wove his hair to a weavers loom, he would not be able to extricate himself. She had tried it, while he was asleep, and had even fixed the loom with nails, but behold, Samson awakening, got up, carrying the whole weavers apparel with him on his head. Delila once being informed wherein his strength was, lost no time, but forthwith made him sleep and shaved off his hair. Then the Philistines came and seized him, and bound him and put out his eyes. And as they gathered in their temple to offer a great sacrifice, on account of their good fortune in capturing Samson, they wanted him to make sport before them; but he prayed the Lord, to give him back his strength only for this once, and the Lord heard his prayer; thus Samson seizing on the two pillars, whereupon the house was supported, bent them with might, and the whole house came down upon all the lords of the Philistines and all the people within; besides these there were three thousand people on the roof, who also were killed, so that the dead whom Samson slew at his death, were more than those he had slain in his life.—The history of Samson is, as nobody will doubt, highly edifying, for we learn thereby plainly to discover the strengthening influence of the holy spirit of the Lord, as in no part of the bible this is as palpably described. Moreover, it is interesting to learn that the Philistines built their temples on two pillars, placed very near to each other; they must accordingly have understood the laws of equilibration better than do the architects of the later ages; this, indeed, is worth noticing.

CHAPTER XVII.—And there was a man with the name of Michah, who stole from his mother eleven hundred pieces of silver. The mother cursed the unknown thief, but afterwards, as her son became penitent, and brought the money back, she blessed him and gave him the whole sum, save two hundred pieces, which she kept to herself. The man Michah built with that money a house of god, and placed therein an ephod and a teraphim (image). He also engaged a young Levite to serve him as priest, and said within himself, “now I know that the Lord will do me good, as I obtained a Levite for a priest.”

CHAPTER XVIII.—In those days there was no king in Israel, and in those days the tribe of Dan was looking out for an inheritance to dwell in, as they had not gotten any until then. They sent out spies, and these passing by the house of god of Michah, inquired of the Lord whether they should be successful, to which the Lord gave a favorable reply. Also they were not long to discover a valley, called Layish, where a peaceful people was living, dwelling quiet and secure after the manner of the Zidonians, and no one did wrong in the land, and they were far from Zidon and had no concern with any man (v. 7). The Danites informed of this fair opportunity of getting an inheritance, sent immediately an army of six hundred men, who surprised the peaceful people, and killed them all, as there was no deliverer to them (v. 28). They further took possession of the land and of everything; and also robbed Michah's ephod and teraphim, appointing his Levite for their priest.

CHAPTER XIX.—And it happened in those days that a certain Levite of the mountain of Ephraim took to himself a concubine from Bethlehem-Judah. The woman became faithless, and ran off unto her father's house. After a year's time her husband got up and went after her to speak kindly unto her. Having staid a few days at her father's, he travelled homewards accompanied by his concubine; they reached before night not farther than Gibeah, a town of the children of Benjamin, and finding there no lodging, they seated themselves on the street, until an old man who passed by invited them in. But lo, scarcely were they in the house, or all the men of Gibeah surrounded the house, shouting and making a tremendous uproar, desiring the stranger (the Levite) to come out in order to satisfy their lust upon him. The old man offered his virgin daughter, but this would not suit them, they wanted the Levite. He (the levite) then to make an end to the matter thrust his concubine out of doors, which had the favorable result of calming the uproar. The next morning when getting up to start on the road, he opened the door and said to his concubine, "rise up, let us be going;" but she being unable to move he took her up, placed her on the ass, and set off. Arrived at home, he took hold of her, and drawing his knife cut her into twelve pieces, sending a piece to each of the twelve tribes—This singular history looks very much like a free imitation of the story of Sodom. The cutting in pieces though, is a remarkable improvement, as adding to the holiness of this tale of the holy scripture.

CHAPTER XX.—The children of Israel having received the pieces of meat assembled as one man, and after being informed by the Levite what was the cause of his sending them such unusual presents, they sent an army of four hundred thousand men against the town of Gibeah. The children of Benjamin immediately gathered also an army to resist the other one, but their army was only twenty-six thousand strong, among whom were seven hundred men of Gibeah, all lefthanded, but flinging stones with the left at a hair that would not miss (v. 16). The children of Benjamin were twice victorious, notwithstanding the odds against them. In the first encounter they killed twenty-two thousand of the Israelites, and in the second one they killed eighteen thousand; but when the third battle took place the children of Benjamin got beaten, and lost twenty-five thousand men, while Israel lost only thirty men. And all the cities of the Benjaminites were destroyed by fire, and all what breathed was killed, so that the whole tribe of Benjamin was destroyed, save six hundred men who fled in the cleft of a rock.—This destruction of nearly the whole tribe was probably in fulfilment of the great blessing spoken by Moses (Deut. XXXIII: 12), in which Benjamin is called the beloved of the Lord, that shall dwell in safety by him. Still, it may be observed at the same time, that the number of the army of the Israelites, and of the killed ones, as given here appears rather fabulous, and speaks not for the truth of the story. Also the assertion (appearing in v. 28), that Pinchas, the grandson of Aaron, was high-priest at this time, (while

Pinehas died some three centuries ago), proves plainly that it was a clumsy clown who wrote this story.

CHAPTER XXI.—The men of Israel had sworn in Mispah, saying : not any one of us shall give his daughter unto Benjamin for wife. Soon, however, they repented of having destroyed one of the twelve tribes, and thought upon some means of rebuilding it. They accordingly fetched the six hundred Benjaminites out of the cleft and ordered them to take the daughters of the city of Yabesh for wives, while the males and old women were killed by the Israelites, under pretence for having not attended an offering feast. And as they got still some females too less, they stole the balance from the city of Shiloh ; thus the tribe of Benjamin was built up again. And in those days, says the author of the Judges, there was no king in Israel, and every one did what was right in his own eyes.—That the latter was the case, we perceive from the interesting accounts we read, yet we thought that the Lord, the God of Israel, was supposed to be king, but, alas, it seems his kingship was of no account at all.

As proof how reliable the book of Judges is, may the circumstance serve that the number of years enumerated here for the different periods of peace or servitude, from Joshua until Samson, is already larger than the whole period from the entrance in Palestine to Saul, which, according to Jewish calculation, counted only 367 years.

THE BOOK OF RUTH.

CHAPTER I.—Now it happened in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land (in the land of milk and honey), therefore a man of Bethlehem-Judah named Elimelech went to reside in the fields of Moab. The man died and left his wife, Naomi, with her two sons behind. Each of her sons married a Moabite daughter, one of these women was called Orpah, the other Ruth. Now it unfortunately happened that both the sons died also, leaving the mother alone with her two daughters-in-law. Naomi being informed that the Lord visited his people and gave them bread, made up her mind to return to her people in Judah, and she said to her daughters-in-law : turn away, why will ye go with me, are there any more sons in my womb ? I am too old to have a husband, and even if I should have one to-night and bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown up ? As the daughters heard this they cried and wept, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her. Thus Naomi, the widow, came back into Bethlehem-Judah only accompanied of a daughter-in-law.

CHAPTER II.—And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a mighty man of wealth ; his name was Boaz. And Ruth said unto Naomi, now let me go to the field and gather corn after him in whose eyes I shall find grace. And she said, go my daughter. Boaz seeing her, treated her with more than usual kindness, and ordered his men to treat her with respect

CHAPTER III.—Naomi advised thereupon her daughter to go to Boaz's harvest feast dressed in her handsomest attire, and then, when Boaz should have drunk sufficiently, and should take a nap on the threshing-floor, she should follow him and lay down beside him, under the same covering. Ruth said to her mother, "all thou sayest unto me I will do." And Ruth did so ; now it happened that Boaz did not awake of his nap before midnight ; he then groping around him discovered a woman laying at his feet. "Who art thou ?" said he. "I am Ruth, thine handmaid," said she ; "spread thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman." And he said, "blessed be thou of the Lord." He further told her that, though a kinsman, there was another kinsman nearer than he, but he should go in the morning and inquire of him whether he would perform unto her the part of a kinsman or not ; if he would not, then he would do it. In the meanwhile he kept her with him until the break of day.

CHAPTER IV.—Early the next morning Boaz went to the gate of the town and waited there for the other kinsman to pass by. When he saw him he inquired of him whether he would redeem Elimelech's inheritance. The kinsman said he would, but being informed that the inheritance consisted in nothing but a widow without property, he immediately gave up all claim to it. Boaz then married Ruth, the Moabite, and all the people that were in the gate said, "the Lord grant that the woman be fertile like Rachel and like Leah, and thou (Boaz) do worthily and be famous in Bethlehem." . . . Ruth soon brought forth a son, whose name was Obed, and he was the grandfather of king David.

This account of Ruth and her amours with Boaz, though not as shocking as the accounts of slaughter and treason of the book of Judges, is nevertheless a story which, we deem, might as well have been left out of such a holy book as the bible purposes to be. For, if similar stories are fit to take a place in it, we might as well give an extension to the bible of several volumes containing stories of the same kind, since they happen daily. One may answer, "it was written because Ruth was a fore-mother of king David and of Jesus Christ," but we say, seeing that they will have had a great number more of fore-mothers, the bible compilers did not need to select the story just of one who prostituted herself, and who moreover was a Moabite. For, it looks not well for a king, and still worse for a son of God, to have a fore-mother who played the part of a bralot. And to have a fore-mother who was a Moabite, was not right neither. In Numb. XXXI. we are taught that every Israelite who should marry a Moabite should be put to death ; we are further taught in Deut. XXII. that the descendants of strangers, that would embrace the Hebrew religion, should be ex

cluded from the tabernacle, until the tenth generation. These are, we think, weighty reasons why this story of the Moabite woman should have been left out.

THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL.

CHAPTER I.—And there was once a man of Ramathaim-Zophim, whose name was Elkanah, and he got two wives. The one was called Hannah, the other one Peninnah. Now Peninnah begat children, but Hannah had none. And this man went up to Shiloh once a year with his wives, to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts; on these occasions he was wont to give to Hannah twice as large an allowance of meat as to Peninnah, for he loved Hannah, though she was barren. This sign of partiality of his caused jealousy among the two, in consequence of which Peninnah provoked Hannah so much as to spoil her appetite and cause her to weep. Thus, one day Hannah rose up after dinner, in the bitter grieving of her soul, and she went to the temple praying unto the Lord, and vowing a vow that if the Lord should give her a son he should be his for life. The high-priest Ely who was sitting on a chair at the door of the temple, hearing her lamentations, asked if she was drunk, and recommended her to vomit; but she gave him to understand that she was not drunk, and told him her troubles; he then said: go away in peace, the Lord grant thee thy petition. And it also did happen that after the lapse of due time she brought forth a male child, whose name she called Samuel. When the child was weaned, she brought him into the house of the Lord at Shiloh, and presented him to the priest, with addition of three bullocks, and a barrel of flour and a bottle of wine.

CHAPTER II.—The young Samuel remained with Eli, the priest, and grew up and ministered before the Lord, and he was a lad girded with a linen coat, and his mother made him every year a little overcoat to wear also. Samuel was much beloved by the people, but the sons of Eli were a worthless set; for, when the people were cooking their meat, the sons of Eli came with a large fork, picking from the pan or kettle all what the fork could hold, taking it away for themselves. Besides this, they would lie with women, who assembled always in large numbers before the tabernacle. Complaints about these things were made before Eli, but he being old, did not wish to disturb himself about it. Then came a man of God unto Eli, saying, that though the Lord had once destined the house of Aaron to be priests, he had now altered his mind, and should make a better choice.

CHAPTER III.—And it happened one night when Eli and Samuel were both lying down in the temple, that Samuel heard himself called by name, at first he

thought it was Eli who called him. but thereupon he discovered it was the Lord himself, who came to see him and to tell him that he should punish the house of Eli.

CHAPTER IV.—Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and the Philistines put themselves in battle array and beat the children of Israel, killing four thousand men. The next day the children of Israel went out again, carrying in their midst the ark of the Lord, in order to secure the victory on their side. The result, however, was different of what they expected, for they were beaten, and the ark of the Lord was taken away, and both the sons of Eli, who accompanied the ark, were killed. And a man of Benjamin, who fled from the field, ran towards Shiloh bringing the fatal report to Eli. The consequence was, that Eli, overcome by the news, fell down in a fit, breaking his neck.—Thus the family of Aaron ended its priestly career, which the Lord once had promised should have been a priesthood for ever.

CHAPTER V.—The Philistines brought the ark into the house of Dagon, their god ; but lo, when the inhabitants of the town rose up in the morning they found their god lying upon his face before the ark. They set him up again, but see, the next day he was lying again in the same position, and moreover this time with his head and hands cut off; besides this, all the inhabitants of the place were now troubled with hemorrhoids. They requested of their prince to remove the ark, which was agreed to, so that the ark was removed to Gath. But now the inhabitants of Gath got in trouble, for great consternation came among them, because every one, small and great, got hemorrhoids in his secret parts. Thereupon the ark was sent to Ekron with the same unlucky result, for the hemorrhoids were here so violent as to cause the death of many.—We must confess that the manner by which the Lord thought to make the Philistines tired of keeping the holy ark was peculiarly ingenious, since nobody will ever be pleased with having hemorrhoids ; though we do not conceive how the Philistines understood that the ark was the cause of their troublesome visitor. The cutting off Dagon's head was a more direct token of the Lord's anger, at having his ark placed in Dagon's presence ; but what concerns the hemorrhoids, we rather suppose this plague was originated by some of the Levites, who followed Moses' example ; for did we not see in Exod. IX : 8-9, that Moses and Aaron knew how to procure inflammations and boils upon the Egyptians, by throwing out some stuff, which Moses calls soot of the furnace, but which probably was some kind of strong drug in the shape of dust, that by fixing itself on the perspiring skins of the half-naked people will have caused itching and inflammation. Seeing that the Levites were sometimes priests of cast images (as may be seen in Judges XVIII), we would not wonder if the priests of Dagon were Levites, who, though serving the idol, were not unwilling to assist their brethren in getting back their costly ark.

CHAPTER VI.—Then the Philistines called for the priests and diviners, saying: what shall we do with the ark of the Lord? The priests advised them to send it back to its place, but not empty, they should add to it a trespass offering in honor of the God of Israel, consisting of five golden mice, five golden images of hemorrhoids, and two milk-cows put to a new wagon, on which the ark should be placed. This was agreed upon, and the cows put to the wagon, and left alone, went of their own accord in the direction of Shiloh.

CHAPTER VII.—Samuel was judge in Israel twenty years, and offered for the people, exhorting them to put aside the god Ashtaroth; if they would do this the Lord should deliver them of the Philistines. The Philistines hearing of his preachings came up against Israel, but Samuel offered a sucking lamb, wherefore the Lord thundered with a loud voice, which brought the Philistines in confusion, so that they fled and never came back all the days of Samuel.

CHAPTER VIII.—And it happened when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. His sons, however, did not walk in the way of their father, but took bribes and perverted justice, so that Israel complained and wished to have a king as other people had. Samuel declared to them that the Lord was their king, and exhorted them not to take another, as he would take away to himself all the best of what they possessed. The children of Israel, nevertheless, obstinately insisted to have their king.—Seeing that under the reign of the Lord every one did what was right in his own eyes, we are not surprised to hear that Israel wished a more powerful king, the more so since the taxes to be paid by the people would not be heavier, because the Lord also had been accustomed to take to himself all the best of what the people got; they might therefore as well give it to another king as to him. Yet there is to be noticed that the election of a king was fully in accordance with what the Lord had recommended through Moses, in Deut. XVII: 14, 15.

CHAPTER IX.—Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, and he had a son whose name was Saul; a choice young man, even the handsomest man among the children of Israel. And once it happened that the asses of Kish had gone astray; Saul, on that account, went up with one of their servants in search of them. They searched on the plains and in the mountains, but the asses were nowhere to be found, so that Saul thought of returning homewards, but upon the advise of the servant, he went, before doing so, to the man of God to inquire after the asses. At first Saul had objected to go, because he said he got no money to pay him, but the servant said to have a quart shekel with him and this would suffice; thus they went up to the seer. "For in those times it was the custom in Israel that when a man wished to ask something of God, he said: come, let us go as far as the seer, for the prophet of later days was in olden times called a seer" (v. 9).—One perceives by this how respectable an employment it was to be a prophet; about the same as that of a fortune

teller of our days.—The seer where Saul and his servant went, was Samuel. Samuel received them particularly well, inviting them to dine with him, and ordering his cook to dress a choice dish of meat which should be prepared for Saul alone.

CHAPTER X.—The next morning Samuel poured out a flask of oil over his new friend, informing him, the Lord had chosen him to be the chief over his inheritance. He also told him, he should meet, on his way home, with a company of prophets, and then, of a sudden the spirit of the Lord would come over him and change him into another man. This came to pass, and Saul prophesied with the rest of the company, so that the people who saw it, said with astonishment : is Saul also among the prophets?—Though Saul seems to have been among the prophets for a while, still what he prophesied seems not to have been of any importance, seeing, that in such case, it would, for a certainty, have been written down. Whether the private dish of meat which Saul had been caused to eat, has contained some drug which had the faculty of making a man temporarily crazy, we could not tell, but if so, it would have been through the assistance of Samuels cook, that Saul was made a prophet for a while.

CHAPTER XI.—Nachahs, the Ammonite, was in the field against Yabash in Gilead. The inhabitants of Yabash said : make a treatise with us; but Nachahs would not, except on condition that he should put out their eyes; nevertheless (and strange enough) he granted their request to wait for some days until they should get assistance. Then came Saul, who cut two cows to pieces, sending a piece to every tribe, with the admonition, that if they did not come forthwith to deliver Yabash, he would cut all their cattle after the same manner. The threat took effect, so that the city was saved, and Saul proclaimed king before the Lord in Gilgal.

CHAPTER XII.—Once Samuel held an oration before the people, thereby praising himself highly and desiring of the people to accuse him, if they could, before the Lord and his anointed (king). He further told the people, they had greatly sinned by desiring to have a king. While he was speaking of this matter, there came a storm with thunder and lightening; he said, this happened in proof of the anger of the Lord. Then came all the people begging him to pray in their behalf, that they might not die. Samuel, generously, promised to do so, provided they promised to serve the Lord with all their heart,—which, in other words, meant, they should serve the priests of the Lord, with all their goods.

CHAPTER XIII.—When Saul had reigned a year, he selected for himself an army of three thousand men. The Philistines then marched against him with thirty thousand men and six thousand chariots, and people as numerous as the sand of the sea-shore. Saul assembled his army in Gilgal, and waited there for

Samuel who should come to offer for them, but as Samuel tarried to come for many days, the men of Saul deserted him ; he therefore to prevent a total loss of all his army, offered himself unto the Lord. While busy therewith, Samuel arrived ; the worthy priest was exceedingly indignant upon this discovery, and cursed Saul in the name of the Lord, saying the Lord once intended to establish his dynasty for ever, but now had chosen another king, one after his own heart. Saul then went away followed only by six hundred of his men.

CHAPTER XIV.—Jonathan, Sauls son gave proof of great courage, by killing alone with his armour bearer twenty men of the outposts of the Philistines, causing thereby alarm in their camp, so that they, thinking that they were attacked by a large force of the enemy, fought against another, and were, in this way, easily dispersed by Saul's army.

CHAPTER XV.—Samuel called on Saul ordering him in the name of the Lord to fight against Amalech, and kill all what breathed. Saul went up, but spared the king and kept the best of the cattle alive. Samuel hearing this came and cursed Saul, and also ordered the king of Amalech to be brought before him. The king came cheerfully, thinking they would treat him well, but he was mistaken in his expectation, for scarcely was he before Samuel, when this worthy priest drew his sword and cut him to pieces. Samuel thereupon went away and did not see Saul any more until the day of his death ; and the Lord was sorry for having made Saul a king.—If the Lord had taken the precaution of selecting a king willing to comply with all the wishes of the priest, then he would never had had cause to repent ; but, we see, the Lord had been too rash in his selection.

CHAPTER XVI.—The Lord advised Samuel no longer to worry himself about Saul, as he had now chosen another king, to wit, one of the sons of Jesse. Samuel should go thither and anoint him as king. Samuel however objected, saying Saul would kill him if he should get to hear what he had done ; but the Lord said Samuel should take a heifer with him and say he went there to offer. Arrived in Bethlehem, Samuel went to Jesse and saw there seven of his sons. He understood that none of these were the chosen one, and asked of Jesse if he got no other sons. Jesse replied he got one more, the youngest, who was in the field minding the flocks. The youngster, of the name of David, was now sent for, and he soon proved to be the one the Lord had alluded to. He was anointed by Saul, and when this was done the spirit of the Lord came suddenly upon David, but departed from Saul, making place for an evil spirit of the Lord, which came upon the latter in order to torment him. And the servants of Saul advised him to take one that could make music in his house, so as to divert his attention by music whenever the evil spirit was troubling him. Saul approved of it, and David, the son of Jesse, who was a harp-player, was brought into his house.

CHAPTER XVII.—The Philistines gathered their army to battle against Saul, and the latter put also his army in battle array; the armies were separated by a valley. Now out of the camp of the Philistines a champion went out, Goliath was his name, and his height was six cubits and a span (nearly nine and a half feet), and he challenged the Israelites to send a man to fight him, but none dared to come forwards. During forty days he thus insulted the arrays of the living God, until David the son of Jesse, heard of the challenge and undertook to take it up. He approached the giant with no other arms than with his staff, and with a sling, and some smooth stones, and when drawn near enough to hit him, he threw a stone, against his forehead, thus killing him, even without having given the champion a chance for a fight. David was now, by all the people of Israel, considered an exceedingly great hero.—We suppose however that the Philistines saw in him nothing but a skilful stone-slinger, who killed their champion in an unfair manner.

CHAPTER XVIII.—David made the acquaintance of Jonathan, Saul's son, and the soul of Jonathan became knit to the soul of David, and they made a covenant of everlasting friendship; also Saul set him over the wars-men, and he was accepted in the eye of all the people. But as it happened, when they returned from the battle, that the women sang: Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands! this annoyed Saul greatly, and he began to look with jealousy upon David. Even one day, when the evil spirit was upon him, he tried to strike him with his spear, but David escaped.

CHAPTER XIX.—Saul declared before Jonathan, and all his servants, his intention to kill David, but Jonathan spoke in his favor so that David was allowed to live. Nevertheless, it happened once again when the evil spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, that he tried to strike him with his sword, but David this time again slipped away, and fled from before Saul; and he went to Samuel in Ramah. Saul sent messengers to fetch him back, but lo, when they came into the presence of Samuel, they began to prophesy and would not return. Saul sent then other messengers, but with the same result; he sent again others, and again they did not return. At last he went up himself, but arrived before Samuel, the spirit of God came upon him and he also began to prophesy, and even in such a degree of high spiritedness, that he stripped himself off all his apparel and lay down naked for twenty-four hours.—We perceive by this that the spirit who made those people prophets, had a great similarity in its effect to the spirit of the distillery, for as the latter make people fools and take away their senses, so it was with the spirit that came upon Saul and his messengers. To intoxicate people it is not always required to give them intoxicating drinks, since the breathing of intoxicating air will have the same effect. That Samuel knew how to make of plain people prophets, we saw already in Chapt. X. This story is, for the rest, not in accordance with what is said in Chapt. XV., namely, that Samuel did never meet with Saul again till the day of his death.

CHAPTER XX. till XXXI.—The rest of this book, containing nothing interesting for the history, since it merely records sundry fights with the Philistines and others, and the hunting of Saul after David, we deem it proper to pass it over, and to proceed to the second book of Samuel; the more so, because we have already treated of the principal facts this book contains, namely the transition of the priesthood for-ever of Aaron's family, to another family, and the election of a human king over Israel, instead of the Lord of Israel, who proved to be unable to reign as king.

THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL.

CHAPTER I.—Though we read in I Samuel XXV : 1, "and Samuel died," still we got yet several chapters, which appears to have been written after his death; and now we even find a whole book bearing Samuel's name as author, containing nothing but the accounts of events which occurred after him; he, thus proves to have been a man of strong prophetic propensities, so as to be able to write with so much accuracy what should come to pass. If not written by Samuel, we do not see any acceptable reason why they give this book his name.

Now it happened at the death of Saul that a man came out of Saul's camp, hastening towards David, to bring the report of the disastrous end of the battle. He stated also that he himself had killed Saul, expecting that he would be rewarded for that deed, but he was mistaken, for David annoyed by the intelligence that a king anointed with the holy ointment of the Lord, was murdered by a common human's hands, caused the man to be put to death, and he wept over Saul and Jonathan, and sang a mourning-eloxy upon the melancholy incident.

CHAPTER II.—And it happened after this, that David inquired of the Lord, whether he should go up to the land of Judah. The Lord replied : Go up ! And David said : whither shall I go up ? Then the Lord said : Unto Hebron ! So David went up and dwelt there, and the men of Judah came unto him and anointed him as king over the house of Judah. But Abner the captain of Saul, took Ishboseth, the only surviving son of Saul, and proclaimed him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and Yezreelites, etc, and over all Israel.—We notice by this that the so-called kings of Israel were not, as is generally believed, the king of the tribes of Israel only, but also of the heathen tribes who inhabited the land.

CHAPTER III.—There was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, but David became stronger, while Ishboseth became weaker. Abner, however upheld with all his might the house of Saul, until he and Ishboseth got

into a quarrel about a concubine of Saul, whom Abner had taken unto himself. In consequence of this, Abner went over into David's service and tried to unite all Israel under his scepter. In this he had almost succeeded, were it not, that Joab, Davids captain, got jealous, and stabbed him treacherously.

CHAPTER IV.—When Saul's son heard that Abner was dead, his hands became weak. And he had two brothers in his service, captains of bands ; they entered his house, while he was taking a nap at noon, and stabbed him to death. They brought his head to David expecting a reward, but the reward they received was to be put to death in punishment of their murder.

CHAPTER V.—All the tribes of Israel came now unto David, saying : behold, thy bone and thy flesh are we. David made a covenant with them before the Lord, and they anointed him king over Israel. Till then David had resided in Hebron, but deeming now Jerusalem a fitter place of residence, he went up against it to capture it from the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, but did not succeed. Still, he took the stronghold, called Zion, which was before the city and built a town around it, calling it David-city. And David felt satisfied that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, and he, accordingly took a large number of concubines and wives. The Philistines came repeatedly to attack him and tried to expel him, but, with the help of the Lord, David drove them back whenever they appeared.

CHAPTER VI.—And David assembled all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand in number, to bring up the ark of God, the Lord of hosts, from Baale into Zion. They carried the ark on a new wagon ; now it happened that while on the road, the oxen stumbled, so that the ark was near to falling from the wagon. A young man, named Uzzah, who attended the ark raised his hand to stop its fall, but lo, the anger of the Lord was kindled because he touched the ark, and he died on the spot. David seeing this was much afraid of the ark, and would not allow it to be brought into his city, and therefore deposited the same into the house of Obed-edom, a Gittite. From that day the Gittite was blessed by the Lord and grew rich ; David being informed of it, ordered at once the ark to be brought into Zion. While the ark was removed, David went himself before it, dancing and singing ; his wife Michal seeing that, told him, it was not the conduct suitable for a king. As punishment for her remark she got no child until the day of her death.—In II Sam. XXI : 8. we discover however that Michal bore five sons. That the Gittite was blessed by the Lord since the ark was in his house, is not precisely a miracle when remembering that the ark was almost entirely made of gold. Now a small piece of gold picked up every day, does a great deal for the comfort of a poor man. And what concerns the death of Uzzah for touching the ark, we suppose that the ark did touch him more sensibly than he touched it, and that this was the cause of his death out the anger of the Lord.

CHAPTER VII.—Once, while David was seated comfortably in his house, in company with the prophet Nathan, he said, while conversing with him : see now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the Lord dwelleth within a curtain.—According to Moses the ark was the seat, whereupon the Lord was seated.—That same night the Lord made his appearance before Nathan and said, he had not dwelt in a house since the day he led the children of Israel out of Egypt, but had always been moving about, sitting in a tent. Often he had said unto Levi : why do ye not build for me a house of cedar ? but they had not done it. He therefore, appreciated very highly the good intention of David, though, he at the same time, gave him to understand that he better had leave the work to his son that should succeed him ; the Lord should therefore bless this son and establish his throne for ever (v. 13-16).—A pity the dynasty of David has not lasted forever ; already after Solomon's death the kingdom was split asunder.

CHAPTER VIII.—And it came to pass after this that David beat the Philistines and humbled them. He also beat the Moabites, and laying them down on the ground, he measured them with a line, putting to death two lines, and keeping alive one line. And they became David's servants, bringing him presents. He beat also Hadadezer, and the Syrians and the Edomites, and the Lord helped David wherever he went.

CHAPTER IX.—David, returned from the victories, inquired whether there was yet any one left of Saul's house, that he might show him kindness. They found a son of Jonathan still living, lame on both feet, his name was Mephibosheth ; David took him into his house, and returned to him the estate of Saul.

CHAPTER X.—David sent messengers unto Hanun, king of Ammon, to condole with him for his father's death. Hanun, though having no faith in the compliment, sent the messengers back half shaved and their garments half cut off. This joke caused a war ; but the Ammonites having no army to resist David, they hired an army of thirty thousand Syrians. They were however defeated by Joab, David's captain ; but the Syrians assembled again. At that moment David came out, and he also beat them, taking seven hundred chariots, and killing forty thousand Syrian horsemen.—That was well done of David—killing forty thousand men of an army that got but thirty thousand !

CHAPTER XI.—And it happened at the return of the spring, at the time when kings go forth to fight, that David sent out Joab and his servants to destroy the children of Ammon ; while he himself remained in Jerusalem. Now it happened once at evening-tide, when David got up from his couch, that he took a walk on the roof of his house, and looking around he discovered in the house opposite a very handsome woman, in the act of taking a bath. He forthwith inquired who she was, and being informed she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, who was with the army, he sent a messenger to order her to come up to see him.

She came and lay with him, and she conceived. She informed David of this, saying : I am with child. He then sent word to Joab to send Uriah up to Jerusalem. Uriah came but did not sleep with his wife. David then tried to get him drunk, and gave him a hearty dinner, thinking it would do its effect, but it was of no use, for Uriah obstinately refused to see his wife. This obstinacy of Uriah put David in an unpleasant dilemma ; thus, to get out of the difficulty, he thought, the easiest manner would be to get Uriah out of the way ; he therefore sent him back to the camp with a note for Joab, whereby the latter was ordered to place him always on the most dangerous posts in the battle, so as to get him killed as soon as possible. After a couple of days Uriah was killed, and David married his widow.

CHAPTER XII.—The Lord sent Nathan the prophet to moralise David for his conduct, and at the same time to inform him that Bathsheba's child would not live. And so it happened that the child died on the seventh day. David comforted Bathsheba, and went into her, and she conceived again, and bore a son, and his name was called Solomon, but Nathan by reference called him Jedidiah, which means beloved of the Lord. Joab, in the meanwhile attending the fighting for David, and being on the point of capturing Rabbah, a city of the Ammonites, sent word to him to come immediately to reap the honors of the victory. David came and took the city, and brought out the booty in great abundance ; but the inhabitants he put under saws, and under iron chariots, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through brick-kiln ; thus he did unto all the cities of the children of Ammon (v. 31).—This, we must allow, was a very ingenious way of putting enemies to death ; and no wonder the Lord esteemed David so highly, for he was worthy of it, were it but for the manner in which he destroyed those cursed heathens. It is true that some pretend this passage to be wrongly translated, but to them we recommend to peruse I Chron. XX : 3, so that they may be assured that David actually cut the people with saws, axes, etc.

CHAPTER XIII. — Absalom, a son of David's, had a sister named Tamar, who was very handsome. Now Ammon, also a son of David, but of another mother, fell in love with her and got sick of it. A friend of his advised him to tell his father, when he should call to see him, that the only remedy which would cure him would be a certain kind of cake which Tamar used to bake ; so that when David should send her to his home to make the cakes, he should have her at his disposal. Tamar was sent for, and she, once being in Ammon's house, was soon ravished, and afterwards sent out of doors. Her brother Absalom swore revenge, and killed Ammon ; he thereupon fled to Geshur, where he resided for three years.

CHAPTER XIV.—David made up his mind to go up against Absalom (for it seems that he assumed too much power in Geshur), but Joab succeeded in

persuading him not to go, showing him how foolish it was to kill one's own children.

CHAPTER XV.—Absalom was allowed to return to Jerusalem, but being returned he kept there a sort of kingly court; and once going to Hebron to pray to the Lord, he assembled there a company of men, with whom he returned to the city for the purpose that they might proclaim him king. David being advised of his approach, fled into the wilderness, weeping as he went.

CHAPTER XVI.—Whilst David was in the wilderness, he had to experience friendly feelings of but a few, while a great many ill treated him; amongst them was Shimei, a relation of Saul's, who followed him, throwing stones at him, saying: away, away, thou man of blood, thou worthless man.

CHAPTER XVII.—Ahithophel, a friend of Absalom's advised him to follow David with the force he had at his disposal, but Hushai, a spy of David, advised him to assemble the whole army of Israel. Absalom followed the latter advice, but by doing so he left David plenty of time to flee out of his reach, and assemble the men of his party.

CHAPTER XVIII.—David numbered the men he had been able to assemble and set captains over them. When Absalom attacked him, the latter was repulsed with great loss; twenty thousand of his men fell, but more were killed by the burning forest than by the sword. And Absalom himself, who was riding on a mule's back, coming under the thick boughs of a large oak, was caught by the oak, and the mule passing under him, he was left hanging "between heaven and earth" by his long hair (v. 9). While he was hanging there, Joab came up and shot him with three darts.

CHAPTER XIX.—Absalom being dead, David returned to Jerusalem, and was king once more.

CHAPTER XX.—Now there was a worthless man of the name of Sheba, who persuaded the people not to follow David, and the people listened unto his voice, and proclaimed him king, but Joab went up against him, besieging him in the city of Abel. The inhabitants of Abel fearing Joab, cut off Sheba's head and threw it before Joab; in this way David got rid of this new competitor.

CHAPTER XXI.—And there came a famine in the land for three years. David inquired of the Lord why this occurred. The Lord said it was in punishment of Saul's having slain the Gibeonites.—We never heard that the Gibeonites should be spared, but always heard that all the inhabitants of the promised land should be destroyed; besides this, we do not see why the punishment came so long after Saul's death.—David being satisfied with the reason the Lord gave,

inquired of the Gibeonites how he could atone for the sin of Saul. They replied by hanging seven relatives of Saul's. David now forthwith gave up to them seven sons of Ayah, daughter of Saul's ; they were all hanged, and thus God was entreated for the land (v. 14).

CHAPTER XXII.—When David had subdued all his enemies, he sang the Lord a psalm. This psalm is a beautiful specimen of highsounding cant, by which David declares that the Lord took so great delight in him because of his righteousness and purity (v. 20–25). And also because he had beaten his enemies, and crushed them to atoms like the dust of the earth, and had trodden them under his feet like the dirt of the street.

CHAPTER XXIII.—Here is recorded David's very last psalm. He declares therein that the spirit of the Lord is always with him, and the words of the Lord are upon his tongue.

CHAPTER XXIV.—The anger of the Lord got aroused against Israel, therefore he suggested to David to number the people. David sent Joab to do it ; but see, scarcely had he done with numbering, or a prophet was sent to David with the message of the Lord that he had to choose a punishment for his numbering the people. He got the choice between three things : either seven years of famine, or three months in the hands of the Philistines, or three days of pestilence. David selected the last one. And the Lord sent a pestilence into Israel, and seventy thousand men died of it ; but when the angel of the Lord began to stretch out his hand over Jerusalem, the Lord said : it is enough—stay thy hand. And the angel of the Lord stood on the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite ; and when David saw the angel that smote the people, he prayed in their behalf, and he bought the threshing floor and built an altar thereon. Thus the Lord was reconciled, and the plague was stayed.

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE KINGS.

CHAPTER I.—Now king David was old, and stricken in years ; and they covered him with clothes, but he got no heat. Wherefore his servants said unto him : let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin ; and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. So they sought for and found a Shunammite virgin of great beauty, but the king got no heat. And it came to pass in those days that Adonijah, brother of Absalom, aspired to the succession, and Joab the warrior, favored his pretensions, but Nathan the prophet, interfering in time,

caused the throne to be secured by David to Solomon, from whom Adonijah implored and obtained forgiveness.

CHAPTER II.—Now the days of king David drew nigh that he should die, and he sent for Solomon, and exhorted him to walk in the ways of the Lord, and keep the laws of Moses; he further charged him not to let the hoar heads of Joab and of Shimei go down to the grave in peace, but with blood; and having spoken those words the worthy friend of the Lord died.—His last commands thus were of blood and revenge. This sublime religious feeling David seems to have imbibed from the laws of Moses.—Solomon being his successor, his first deed as king was to put to death his brother Adonijah, because he asked to marry the above mentioned Shunammite beauty, whom Solomon wanted to appropriate to himself. The old man Joab was next disposed of in the same manner, though he had sought refuge in the house of the Lord and clung to the altar, where it was high crime to shed human blood. Shimei was also killed by Solomon's orders, and several others more. A certain man with the name of Benaiah was the one who butchered them all. Solomon had only to say, "go fall upon him or her," and the thing was done on the spot.

CHAPTER III.—Solomon after this married an Egyptian princess, and he brought her into the city of David until he had finished building his own house, and the Lord's house, and walls around Jerusalem. The people till that time sacrificed in high places, also Solomon sacrificed at Gibeon; here he once sacrificed a thousand burnt-offerings at one time. The Lord, evidently pleased with this munificence, then appeared to Solomon in a dream at night, saying: ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon desired nothing but wisdom to govern well the people of the Lord. The Lord was so much pleased with Solomon's modesty, that he not only granted his request, but promised moreover to make him such a great king as there never was nor would come any like him, either in wisdom, nor in riches, nor honor.—This promise goes for what it is worth. There were no doubt a great many kings and emperors, even in his time, who would have declined exchanging with Solomon, whose kingdom was but puny, and whose subjects were yet an uncivilized nation.—Solomon soon hereafter gave proof of his wisdom in a judgment of two harlots, who both pretended to be mother of one child. Solomon ordered to cut the child in two pieces, and to give a piece to each, supposing the true mother would show herself the most terrified. This succeeded well.—Solomon would, however, have been not a little puzzled if the other woman had exhibited also some feeling, as she easily might have done, whereas most women would not like to see a live child cut through. Therefore the wisdom in this judgment can merely be called a sharp practice.

CHAPTER IV.—Solomon when proclaimed king over all Israel, selected his cabinet ministers. These were most all sons of priests. His rule extended over all the

kingdoms situated between the river (Jordan) and the land of the Philistines (v. 21)—The distance being not quite ten geographical miles, one may judge of the importance of Solomon's kingdom.—And the nations near the frontiers of Egypt, we read, brought him presents and served him.—The author seems to have forgotten that the country between Judea and Egypt belonged to the Arabs or Edomites, who never were under the control or influence of the Israelites, and therefore not likely to make presents to the king of Israel.—And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour and sixty kors of meal, ten fattened oxen and twenty pasture oxen, and a hundred sheep, besides harts and roe-bucks and fallow-deers and fattened fowl (v. 23).—The tremendous power of Solomon may easily be imagined, for not only did he reign over a region of all the kingdoms, which it would take one whole day to walk through, from one end to the other, but besides he was the most powerful eater!—And Solomon had forty thousand stalls for his horses and chariots!—Very likely he kept a large number of horses to act in accordance with what Moses ordained in Deut. XVII: 15, 16.—And God gave unto Solomon wisdom and understanding exceedingly much and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. And he was wiser than all men, even wiser than Ethan, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda.—We may infer from this how exceedingly wise he must have been.

CHAPTER V.—Solomon intended to build the house for the Lord which his father once intended, therefore he requested of the king of Tyre to allow him to cut cedar trees from the Lebanon to build with. This request was granted, and Solomon raised a levy in Israel of thirty thousand men to work in the Lebanon, besides he sent seventy thousand that carried burdens, and eighty thousand hewers.—Seeing that only timber for the house of the Lord and for the house of the king was wanted to be cut, to which purpose one hundred men would probably have been amply sufficient, it may be supposed that those many thousands were intended to do military duty under Hiram, the king of Tyre, to whom the very powerful Solomon was apparently but a tributary;—for we also read in v. 11: and Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand kors of wheat as provision for his household, and twenty thousand kors of beaten oil, thus did Solomon give to Hiram year by year.

CHAPTERS VI and VII.—The house of the Lord to be built was sixty cubits (elbowlengths) long, its breadth twenty, and its height thirty cubits, and it took seven years to construct it. Almost the whole house was overlaid with gold, and all the walls round about ornamented with carved figures of cherubims—probably to be in accordance with the ten commandments of Moses.—Having finished the temple Solomon built a house for himself, for this he used thirteen years, he made it a good deal larger than the temple. It was also a magnificent building.

CHAPTER VIII.—And Solomon ordered the ark of the covenant of the Lord to be brought from the city of David and placed in the new building. On that occasion he assembled the elders of Israel and sacrificed sheep and oxen that could not be told nor numbered for multitudes. In the ark itself nothing was found but the two tables of stone of Moses (no great proof of the genuineness of the other Mosaical writs); still it came to pass that when the priest came out of the holy place a cloud filled the whole house, so that the priests were obliged to cease to minister. Solomon now addressed the people an oration, concluding with a prayer tolerably full of sense—at least far superior to the prayers and psalms of David. He after that sacrificed a peace-offering, consisting in twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred thousand sheep.—This reckless butchery excepting, Solomon appears to have entertained more enlightened ideas about the Divinity than David, who was apparently under the impression that his God dwelt in the tabernacle, while Solomon addresses him as residing in heaven; and merely supposes him to regard his new house with special favor. Though now the idea of a God dwelling in the heavens, or in the sky, is yet a heathenish one, still it is not so absurd as that of a God dwelling in a tent or house.

CHAPTER IX.—The Lord once more appeared to Solomon during the night, ratifying his promises made to David.—Solomon, namely, seems by his constant intercourse with priests to have profited of their example, for we see that he as well as any prophet knew to make the people believe that God sometimes appeared unto him. David ignorantly went to the Ephod to ask the Lord's counsel, but Solomon, more wise, let the Lord come to him.—The Lord again promised him to establish his throne in Israel forever, if he would walk in the same ways as David his father walked in.—Whereas the history learns that the promise was never fulfilled; since the succession to the throne of Israel came to another dynasty at Solomon's death, we must suppose that Solomon has not walked as David did. It is strange, however, the Lord, who ought to have known what was to come, made a promise which he knew would not be kept.—Furthermore the Lord said that if the people of Israel should desert him and serve other gods he would cast them off, and Israel should be a proverb and a by-word among all nations.—This saying is merely a repetition of the words of Moses, see about it (Deut. XXVIII).—The two houses, that of the Lord and that of the king, being entirely finished, Solomon gave to Hiram, the king of Tyre, twenty cities in the land of Galilee in payment for the lumber, gold, and building materials (v. 11).—As we saw that Solomon had paid his lumber already dear enough, in chapter V. of this book, the fact of his giving now twenty cities moreover, would go far to show us that, although Solomon is represented as the greatest king on earth, he nevertheless was utterly dependent from the king of the city of Tyre; whose people though was held in great detestation by the Israelite prophets.—Upon all inhabitants in the cities not being children of Israel, did Solomon, we read, levy a tribute.—No mention, however, is made of the cities which were inhabited by

Philistines only.—Solomon built also a port on the Red sea (no trace of the port is ever discovered), and he made a navy of ships and sent them to Ofir to fetch him gold.

CHAPTER X.—The Queen of Sheba next came to pay Solomon a visit, having heard of his wisdom and of the state in which he lived; she made him a present of 120 talents in gold and of spices, which Solomon readily accepted. He also got some 660 talents of gold every year from Ofir, besides what he had of the travelling tradesmen; thus Solomon became the greatest king on earth, for riches and for wisdom.

CHAPTER XI.—But king Solomon loved many strange women; he had not less than seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; he clave unto these in love and they turned away his heart after other Gods. Therefore the Lord being angry with Solomon, intended to rend the kingdom from him, giving it to his servants. The Lord would however not do so for David's, his father's sake, but now would rend it from Solomon's son.—The Lord evidently was not just in this instance, for how could he visit upon the son the father's love for strange women—The Lord in the meantime stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, namely Hadad the Edomite. It is true the pious David had killed off all the males in Edom, but Hadad, then only a child, had fled to the king of Egypt, and now being of age, returned to avenge his wrongs. A certain Reron also turned to be Solomon's adversary. And the worst of all was, that Jeroboam a mighty man of valour, happening to take a walk in a new garment, met the prophet Ahijah, the Shilonite, who no sooner saw him or caught hold of the new garment and rent it in twelve pieces, ten of which he gave to Jeroboam; and this settled the succession-question at once, for it proved that over ten of the tribes Jeroboam was to be king, while one was to remain to Solomon's dynasty, (and what should become of the twelfth, is not said.) When now Solomon heard of this, he sought to kill Jeroboam, who arose and fled to the king of Egypt, where he remained until Solomon's death; which, occurred soon hereafter.

CHAPTER XII.—Rehoboam, Solomon's son, was to succeed, but the people hearing of his increasing the taxes, revolted, and elected Jeroboam as king. Judah only remained faithful to the house of David. Jeroboam now fearing, the sacrificing at Jerusalem might suggest a re-union of all the tribes, took counsel, and in accordance with that established two golden calves, that his people might worship, one he placed in Bethel and the other in Dan, and the people worshipped them.—It is remarkable that the Lord, after giving himself so much trouble to deliver his people from Egyptian idolatry, selected as their king, Jeroboam, who at once re-instituted the idolatry. However it is not to be wondered at that the people worshipped rather a harmless calf, than such a changeable Lord.

CHAPTER XIII.—A man of God out of Judah then came to Bethel, while Jeroboam was standing at the altar to sacrifice, and he cried out, that the Lord would offer the priests of the high places that burned incense there. In proof of which saying the altar would be rent; and behold it came to pass as the man had spoken, that the altar burst.—This miracle though great and wonderful, could still have been effected by gunpowder, as we mentioned in Joshua VI, in relation to the falling of the walls of Jericho.—The holy man thereupon, went back to Judah, as the Lord had ordained him, but it happened on his way that he was overtaken by another prophet, who pretended to be sent by the Lord to invite him to his house to eat and drink; the invitation was accordingly accepted. The Lord was angry about such violation of his command, and therefore the man of Judah was killed by a lion; the old prophet however, who under false pretences had enticed him to his house, came to no harm. They afterwards found the corpse, with the lion and the ass of the holy man standing by; they took the corpse away to give it burial. The lion and the ass, it is said, did not interfere, but still looked on.

CHAPTER XIV.—The son of Jeroboam got sick and his mother went up to Ahijah, (the same prophet who had promised him the crown some time before,) for advice; scarcely had she made her appearance at the door, when Ahijah called her by her name and informed her, that evil would befall the house of Jeroboam; the Lord would not only cut off from Jeroboam all that pisseth against the wall, but also cause them to be taken away like dung and eaten by the dogs.—This interesting prophecy notwithstanding, we find it on record, that Jeroboam reigned 22 years, died and was buried in a respectable manner.—Rehoboam meanwhile reigned in Judah, where the most disgusting immorality prevailed; the king of Egypt paid him a visit, and at the same time plundered the house of the Lord and the palace at Jerusalem in the most pitiful manner.

CHAPTER XV.—Abijam succeeded in Judah, his father Rehoboam, but he walked in all the sins of his father, yet for David's (his progenitor) sake did the Lord give him a lamp in Jerusalem, because David had always done what was right in the eyes of the Lord, save only in the matter of Uriah (v. 5).—In II Sam. XXIV: 1, we were informed very differently about David.—Abijam having reigned three years was again succeeded by his son Assa. And Assa did what is right in the eyes of the Lord; he removed all the idols which his fathers had made, and he brought his own sanctified things into the house of the Lord, silver, gold and vessels. And there was war between Assa and Baasha, a successor of Jeroboam king of Israel, all their days. And Baasha built Ramah on the frontiers of his kingdom, to prevent any one to go out or to come in to Assa. Then did Assa take all the gold of the house of the Lord and sent it to the king of Damascus that he might assist him against Baasha. The king of Damascus came and beat the king of Israel; Assa thereupon demolished Ramah. And the rest of all the acts of Assa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built,

are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet (v. 23.)

CHAPTER XVI.—Then came the word of the Lord to Jehu against Baasha predicting of him that, because he had acted as wickedly as Jeroboam, therefore his house should die out, like that of Jeroboam, and they all should be eaten by dogs. But we read a few lines further: And Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Thirzah, and Elah his son became king in his stead (v. 6).—This Elah, was two years later treacherously murdered by his servant Zimri.—Vs. 8 of this chapter says he began to reign in the 26th. year of Asa, he reigned two years, and yet vs. 10 says he died in the 27th. year of Asa.—Zimri became now king. After some years the people made Omri king instead of Zimri. And Omri did what is evil in the eyes of the Lord, yea did worse than all that were before him. Yet Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria, and Achab his son became king in his stead.

CHAPTER XVII.—Then came Elijah, a man from Gilead, who informed Achab the king, that there would be no dew nor rain three years according to his word; having prophesied this, Elijah fled to the brook Cherith, where the ravens brought him flesh and bread in the morning and evening.—In the same manner Mahomet was provided for in the desert by angels, and Moses used to assure the people on his return after his repeated absence, that he had taken no food of any kind; Elijah might have done as much.—Thereupon Elijah went, in obedience of a command of the Lord, to take board at a widows in Zarepath; the widow had only small provisions of oil and flour, but he assured her that her oil and her flour would not diminish, as long as he was with her; and she baked him cakes. The widow's son once took sick and died, Elijah however brought him back to life, which made the woman acknowledge that he was a man of God.—It would appear therefore that she was not yet able to find this out from her stock of flour and oil. This is for the rest the first instance of a miracle of resuscitation from death, of which we find several recorded in the bible, especially in the New Testament. It is however necessary for the reader to know that it cannot be difficult for any one who understands the trick of bringing another in mesmeric sleep to make simple people believe that such one is dead, and then by making the required manual operations to bring such pseudo-dead to life again, to the amazement of the simple bystanders. That the priest of the ancient knew the secret art of Mesmerism is at present generally believed, for the description of the mysteries of Delphi and other places manifest this pretty surely.

CHAPTER XVIII.—It was now nearly three years, that Elijah had been concealed from the king, when he was commanded by the Lord to show himself. He went up and met Obadiah, the governor of the kings house on the way, who told him that the king had immured hundred prophets in a cove; Elijah went notwithstanding, and told Ahab the king, that he was ready to show him who was

the real God, the god Lord or the god Baal. The king accordingly sent up all the people of Israel to the mount Carmel with 450 priests, to build their altar; Elijah built his also, and the altar that first should take fire should determine the question. The priests of Baal did all they could, but without success, even cut themselves with knives and lancets; then came Elijah and ordered an abundance of water to be poured around his altar, and lo, scarcely had he begun to pray before the altar caught fire and burned. This of course convinced the people of his superiority, of which he took advantage by having the 450 priests seized, whom he murdered with his own hands.—Elijah probably knew, that there exist some ingredient, to wit, potassium (kalium) that takes fire when brought in contact with water; a small piece of it dropped in the water underneath the altar would be sufficient to ignite its wood. Elijah needed not to be an able chemist for that, seeing that Potassium is a very common article to be got in all countries.

CHAPTER XIX.—However great Elijah's power may have been, he seems to have feared Jezebel the king's wife, who threatened to take his life for killing the 450 priests; he therefore went into the wilderness, sat down under a juniper tree and prayed the Lord to let him die; (why did he not go to Jezebel?) he fell asleep instead, and was woke up by an angel, who had a cake and a cruse of water for him to eat and drink; this was repeated once, after which he had so far recovered, that he now did walk forty days and forty nights without resting. He arrived then at the mount Horeb, where he took lodgings in a cave. Elijah was after some days called out to stand before the Lord. The Lord then gave him some commands; as to anoint Hazael, as king of Syria, and Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as prophet of Israel; further he should murder in partnership with Elisha, all those that escaped the sword of these here mentioned kings.

CHAPTER XX.—Elijah now appeared before the king Ahab, whom he assured, that the king of Syria, Benhadad, who made war upon him and actually besieged Samaria with a numerous army, were given in his hand by the Lord. Ahab, who had already declared himself willing to surrender his treasure, wives and children to the king of Syria, now ordered out his seven thousand Israelites, who took the Syrians by surprise and defeated them with great loss; Benhadad nevertheless returned, but was again defeated; hundred thousand Syrians were this time killed in battle, and twenty-seven thousand more crushed under the walls of Aphek; then he surrendered to Ahab, who treated him like a brother, even restoring to him part of the booty; which generosity so displeased the Lord, that Elijah had to inform him, that Ahab's life would go for Benhadad's life, that had been doomed to destruction.

CHAPTER XXI.—Ahab now wished to buy his neighbour Naboth's vineyard, but this gentleman declined to sell, wherefore Jezebel the Queen caused him to be indicted by false witnesses for blasphemy and stoned to death by a mob.

Ahab was cursed for this crime, however, in consideration of repentance, he was assured by Elijah that the evil would be visited upon his son instead of upon himself.

CHAPTER XXII.—There had been peace for three years between Israel and Syria, when Ahab thought it was time to go again to war. Jehosaphat, the king Judah, promised him his assistance. The prophets were to inform him beforehand of the result; and lo, four hundred prophets of the Lord told him “go up and prosper;” but Micah said they were lying, and foretold the reverse, which incensed the prophet Zedekiah to such a degree that he struck the prophet Micah on the cheek.—It was not fair of the Lord to make fun of his prophets, but it seems to have been his pleasure to sow dissension and strive among his followers.—Micah was thereupon sent to prison, though he had spoken the truth, for Ahab going to battle was killed and buried; and Ahaziah, his son, became his worthy successor.

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS.

CHAPTER I.—King Ahaziah fell down through a lattice from his upper chamber, and got sick in consequence. He sent messengers to the priests of Baal-Zebub to inquire whether he could be cured. Elijah met the messengers and informed them that the king would have to die, as he had applied to Baal-Zebub instead of the Lord. The king, on hearing this, sent a captain with fifty men to fetch Elijah, but though they addressed him respectfully, they were consumed by fire; another captain with fifty men befell the same fate; the third captain implored Elijah to come to the king, and he went, after being assured by the Lord that he need not fear. He saw the king and told him he must die, and the king died; he was succeeded by Jehoram.—Why Elijah did not anoint Jehu as king, as he had been commanded by the Lord, is not explained. (I Kings XIX) What regards the miracle about burning of the fifty men by a consuming fire, see our observations in Numbers XVI.

CHAPTER II.—The Lord now intended to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind. Elijah wished to be alone, but Elisha would not leave him; all persuasion was lost upon this faithful friend, who had evidently made up his mind to see it out. Accordingly they walked together, crossed the river Jordan on dry ground (Elijah dividing the waters with his mantle). Then finally the prophet asked his friend “what shall I do for thee?” Elisha said “let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me;” this was promised unconditionally. And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that behold, there appeared a

chariot of fire with horses of fire, and it came between them, and Elijah taking place in it, went up into heaven, while the storm-wind was blowing.—We perceive by this that Elijah went up to heaven in much better style than in later days the Son of the Lord, who, according to the New Testament, only sat on a cloud; and consequently we conclude that Elijah was of all others by far the most important man of the bible. The Lord, it appears here, keeps horses and carriages in heaven, which is very interesting to know, as increasing our knowledge of the highest celestial life.

This sudden departure of Elijah startled Elisha so much that he rent his clothes; instead of them he took the mantle of Elijah, which had dropped before him. Arriving at the river he divided the waters with the mantle, and he crossed on dry ground, and in Jericho he told the people what had happened. They at once despatched fifty men to look after Elijah, lest peradventure the spirit of the Lord had cast him upon some mountain or into some valley out of his chariot of fire, but they did not find him after a three day's search. Elisha now, after having cured the waters that were unwholesome—perhaps by throwing alum or salt in the well—went on his way and met a great many little boys, who, like little boys now-a-days might have done, took it into their head to make fun, crying: thou baldhead! go up thou baldhead! But it was a serious thing joking at such a holy man, for Elisha turning round, cursed them; immediately thereupon two she-bears came out of the wood and tore forty and two of the children.—What a beastly revenge! We trust, however, in courtesy to the Mosaical God, that this story was but a delirious vision occurring to Elisha in consequence of the fright which the apparition of the fiery horses must have left in his memory.

CHAPTER III.—Jehoram, a son of Ahab, became king in his stead, in the eighteenth year of Jehosaphat, king of Judah.—In II Kings: 17, he was said to become king in the second year of Joram, the son of Jehosaphat, which does not precisely agree.—Jehoram now got into trouble with the king of Moab, a great sheep master, who used to procure cattle for the king of Israel, but this time refused to do so. Jehoram accordingly allied himself with the kings of Judah and Edom to attack the king of Moab. Their joint armies going through the wilderness of Edom were greatly in want of water, and would have perished but for Elisha, who advised that ditches should be made; this was done, water now became plenty and the hosts were saved. This prophet further took the harp and played, singing thereby what the Spirit inspired him with, and in that way he not only promised a complete victory over the Moabites, but gave it as the will of the Lord that those people should be destroyed and their lands rendered a wilderness. The Moabites were indeed at first almost vanquished, but their king went upon the city walls and there offered his son and successor as a burnt-offering. This act appears to have caused great indignation of the Moabites against Israel, so that the Israelites were obliged to return to their land, leaving Elisha's prophecy unfulfilled.

CHAPTER IV.—This failure of his prophecy does not seem to have discouraged Elisha much, for we soon witness him performing other miracles, to wit: out of a pot of oil a widow, under his protection, filled several vessels. He further passed on to the town of Shunim, where a tall woman lived, who, as often as the prophet passed by, almost forced him to eat with her. She this time even prepared a room for him in her house, whereas she had discovered that he was a man of God. One day, being in his chamber and laying down, he sent Gehazi, his servant, to call the woman; she had an old husband, and as she came she received in acknowledgment of her hospitality Elisha's assurance that after due time she would have a son, and behold, miracle of miracles! a son was born to her according to the prophecy. This boy grew up, but unfortunately got once headache and died; the mother soon went in search of the prophet, who presently went home with her. Being there Elisha stretched himself over the dead lad, this he repeated until the lad sneezed seven times, after which action the lad returned to life.—About such miracle we spoke already in I Kings, XVII. —He performed yet more such wonderful things, which shows that Elisha had indeed inherited two thirds of Elijah's spirit.

CHAPTER V.—Elisha cured Naaman, a Syrian captain, of leprosy, and declined to receive pay therefor; but Gehazi, his servant, ran after Naaman, and obtained the presents from him on false pretences, which so much displeased Elisha that he struck Gehazi with that same evil.—Those priests and prophets of antiquity, no doubt, knew some means to cure leprosy, and it seems they also knew how to transplant the virus on healthy bodies; this, for instance, we saw done by Moses to Miriam, his sister.

CHAPTER VI.—And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, behold the place where we dwell before thee is too narrow for us. Elisha agreed in that opinion, and accordingly they all went out to the Jordan and cut trees to build a larger house; but now it chanced to happen that the axe of one of them fell into the water, Elisha presently cut a stick, and held it into the river, and the iron did swim on account of that. Elisha knew besides this, many things, even he knew what the king of Syria had in his mind, which so much displeased that monarch that he sent a great host to the city of Dothan, where Elisha lived; as the city was surrounded, one of Elisha's scholars began to lament, but Elisha himself was not afraid; for, said he, he was mightier than the king of Syria; also he prayed the Lord to open the eyes of the scholar; this happened, and then the lad saw a host of horses and chariots around him. Then again he x prayed the Lord to strike the enemy with blindness, which immediately took place. They being in that state, he led them to Samaria, where they were well treated by the king of Israel, after which they went home; and the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel (v. 23). And it happened after this (says the next verse) that Benhadad, king of Syria, gathered all his host and went up and besieged Samaria (v. 24).—Samaria was in the land of Israel.

These two verses are thus in downright contradiction.—A terrible famine came now in Samaria, so that a woman boiled her son to use him as food ; and it was on account of this misery that the king made oath that Elisha should be put to death.

CHAPTER VII.—Elisha however obtained a respite of one day, because he promised there would be food in abundance. A captain to the king expressed his unbelief in this prophecy, for which Elisha assured him that he would not participate in that abundance. And see it happened that the Syrians fled that very night, having heard a noise as if hosts of horses and chariots were approaching, leaving large quantities of provisions behind. The city had now abundance of food, but the unbelieving captain was killed in the crowd.

CHAPTER VIII.—Elisha sent the woman, whose son he had brought back to life, out of the country, for the Lord had a famine in store, which was to last seven years.—This proves what delightful country that land of milk and honey was worth to be a land of promise, indeed ! In wars and famine continually, not to speak of all the murders.

CHAPTER IX.—The son of a prophet was then commissioned by Elisha to anoint Jehu as king of Israel ; no sooner was this done, or this worthy assembled his friends and marched to Jezreel, where the king Jehoram was ; he murdered him treacherously, as also Ahaziah the king of Judah, while Jezebel the queen he had pitched out of the window, so that she died.—Ahaziah, of whom is spoken of here, began to reign in the eleventh year of Joram. king of Israel (according v. 29), but according II. Kings VIII : 25 it was in the twelfth year of Joram.

CHAPTER X.—Jehu being king, went at it in good earnest, killing numbers of descendants and relations of Ahab, for they deserved death is said, because Ahab, (who died long years since,) worshipped Baal-Zebub.

CHAPTER XI.—This contains the history of Joash, a son of the late king Ahaziah, who was anointed king by Jehoiada the prophet. He was proclaimed king of Judah, after Jehoiada had succeeded in putting to death queen Athalia, Joash's grandmother for her usurpation and murders. Jehoiada made further a covenant between the Lord, the king, and the people, which was very satisfactory to the high contracting parties.

CHAPTER XII.—Joash walked in the ways of the Lord, giving to the priest all the money which was brought into the house of the Lord, and all the money that was paid by census ; notwithstanding this, we read that he was killed by his own people.

CHAPTER XIII.—Jehoahaz his son was then king of Israel, but his ways

were evil. Therefore the Lord delivered the people of Israel into the hands of the king of Syria, who oppressed them cruelly.—It is surprising that the Lord delivered his chosen people into the hands of a king worshipping Baal, the more so, as it appears, that this was in punishment of the sins of the kings and not of the people.—However a saviour arose amongst Israel, and they dwelt once more in their tents. The time had now arrived for Elisha to rest from his earthly works, and after having predicted on his death-bed to the king that he should beat the Syrians three times, he died. Elisha had been a great prophet, and so great was he even till after his death, that when later a man was buried into the same sepulchre, the moment his body came in contact with the bones of Elisha, he immediately revived and stood on his feet again (vide v. 21).—Nothing can be more conclusive regarding Elisha's greatness.

CHAPTER XIV.—Amaziah was king of Judah in that time, and he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but this was of no avail to him, for the king of Israel attacked and defeated him, plundered the house of the Lord, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. Amaziah was thereupon killed by his people.—Thus we see how the Lord rewarded the piety of his kings.

CHAPTER XV.—Azariah succeeded to the throne of Judah at the death of Amaziah his father; he also did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but the Lord struck him with leprosy, so that he was a leper until the day of his death. Israel in the meantime was attacked by the king of Assyria, but came for this time free, by paying a heavy sum to buy off the evil.

CHAPTER XVI.—Achaz succeeded to the throne of Judah; he did not what is right in the eyes of the Lord, therefore the Lord brought upon him the king of Syria and the king of Israel, but Achaz took all the gold out of the house of the Lord and gave that to the king of Assyria to free himself, which that king accepted.

CHAPTER XVII.—In those days Hoshea was king of Israel, and he did what is evil in the eyes of the Lord. Against him came up Shalmanassar, the king of Assyria, and made him his tributary servant. Hoshea however paid not his tribute, and therefore the king of Assyria came back and made him a prisoner. And the king of Assyria came up over all the land and he captured Samaria, and led Israel away as bondsmen into Assyria.—This then was the end of all the solemn pledges of the Lord to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of all the covenants with his chosen people of Israel. Israel had now experienced how delicious the land of milk and honey was, and how much faith it could place in all the high-sounding promises of the Lord's priests, of the priests of that God that would bless his people and dwell among them for ever!

CHAPTER XVIII.—Hezekiah, the son of Achaz, became now king of Judah

he did, what is right in the eyes of the Lord ; and in the Lord, the God of Israel, did he trust as no king ever had done, and the Lord was with him, whither soever he went. But Hezekiah rebelled against the king of Assyria, and that king came up against him ; he, however, came free, by paying heavy tributes, which he paid, by cutting off the golden ornaments from the temple.

CHAPTER XIX.—King Hezekiah, hearing, that a captain of the Assyrians had harangued the people, thereby insulting the Lord, sent for Jesaiah, the prophet, who now also made a harangue, promising the people that the Lord would deliver that city ; and behold, it happened over night, that an angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand men, who, when they arose early in the morning, were all dead corpses (v. 35).—The above narration is probably somewhat exaggerated, whereas it is not likely that the king of Assyria would have sent an army of 185,000 men against a place of so little importance as Jerusalem, only numbering a few thousand inhabitants, (as apparent in Jeremiah XXXII.)

CHAPTER XX.—Hezekiah was sick to death, and Isaiah the prophet, whom he had called for, informed him, that he was to die ; but before Isaiah had gone into the middle court, the Lord changed his mind, because Hezekiah had prayed ; the Lord now promised, through the prophet, that he would let him live fifteen years longer. Isaiah then put a lump of figs on the boil, and predicted him a perfect cure in three days, in proof of this, the shadow of the dial went back ten degrees.—This, as may be imagined, was a sure sign of the Lord, only throwing the sum some thousands of millions of miles out of her course, simply for the satisfaction of the great Isaiah and his patient.—Isaiah was not only a good physician, but he also proved to be a good prophetizer, for he predicted this time the future captivity of the Jews.—This, of course, deserves admiration, but seeing that this book of kings was written after the captivity of the Jews, as is apparent from chap. XXIV. and XXV., so it is that such prophesying loses all its value.

CHAPTER XXI. & XXII.—After Hezekiah, Manassess was king, and he again was succeeded by his son Josiah. The most remarkable fact that occurred during his reign seems to have been the restoration of the house of the Lord. While they were busy with its repairs, the law-book of Moses was discovered ;—it was, however, stated, (in I Kings VIII) that when Solomon brought the ark into that house, nothing but the two stone tables of Moses were found therein.—The king reading all what was in the law-book was greatly frightened, seeing that no one of the people had ever lived according to it.

CHAPTER XXIII.—The curse, or displeasure of the Lord could, as we read, no more be averted by any good acts of king Josiah, though he did his utmost to please him, reforming vigorously, slaying the priests of Baal, etc. All this notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, where-

with his anger against Judah was kindled, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him with.—Manasseh the provoker though died in peace, and was dead since long years, but now it was the poor people that had to bear the brunt of anger. Such was the way of the Lord.—Josiah was put to death by the king of Egypt. Jehoiakim his son succeeded him, but was tributary to his father's enemy.

CHAPTER XXIV.—In the days of Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son, Nebuchadnezzar came against Judah and conquered it. But after the lapse of three years Jehoiachin rebelled, in consequence of which Nebuchadnezzar came for a second time against Jerusalem. All the enemies of Judah had come this time jointly against her, only the king of Egypt came not, for he was afraid of the king of Babylon, who had taken possession of all the countries between the river of Egypt and the river of Euphrates,—namely the very same land which the Lord had repeatedly pledged himself should exclusively belong to the children of Israel for ever.—Jerusalem thus besieged was soon captured, and the best part of the population, including the king, was carried off in captivity to Babylon. Mattaniah, called Zedekiah, was appointed king over what remained; he too rebelled afterwards.

CHAPTER XXV.—Nebuchadnezzar returned again with his army against Jerusalem in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, and took that city again; he then burnt it and also the temple, after having stripped it off its gold, further he carried off in slavery all the remainder of the population; and what remained yet fled to Egypt.

Here now we see the end of Judah, and of all the magnificent promises of Moses. Israel would be numerous as the sand of the sea and the stars of heaven, and be the most powerful nation on earth. The Lord would always be amongst them and allow them a land of milk and honey; their enemies would he crush, and they alone should reign. How were these promises fulfilled? The best time in their history was under Solomon, and even that king was tributary to the king of Tyre. The whole kingdom of Solomon consisted of Jerusalem and a few villages; a kingdom that one could walk through in one day from east to west. Jerusalem the celebrated city, got nothing remarkable but the house of the Lord with its gildings and golden ark. In no arts or sciences did its inhabitants ever excel; and even of a numerous population that city never could boast, for do we not see when the king of Babylon carried off all the warriors and all men fit for work, their number did not exceed ten thousand in all (vide former Chapter v. 14).—The whole history of the children of Jacob from beginning to end consists of nothing but of accounts of treacherous murders, butchery of innocents, robbery and plunder, yea of so many crimes, that the whole history is disgusting throughout. And now at last, they are transported, this chosen nation of the Lord, carried into slavery throughout the kingdom of Syria and all Asia. The high sounding promises of Moses seduced the Egyptian slaves to follow him abroad, and now these same promises had the consequence,

by the rebellious spirit they produced, of bringing their descendants back into slavery. There is no bliss on evil doings they say, and here also we perceive in fact, that the bloody and lying teachings of the man Moses brought no prosperity to his people.

THE BOOKS OF THE CHRONICLES.

Whereas what is related in these books is principally but a repetition of what the second book of Samuel and the books of the kings contain, we deem it superfluous to repeat those accounts; it would moreover be painful for the believer in the holiness of the bible to be brought thereby to the certainty that there is a mass of contradictions, and also a good deal of rather amusing, though less godly, nonsense to be found in the sacred books of the Chronicles.—For instance, among the many contradictions may be quoted: I Chr. XXI: 1. "And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number the people," while in II Sam. XXIV: 1, it was the Lord who moved David against the people to number them.—So, we find in II Sam. XXIV: 13, that seven years of famine were to come over Israel, while in I. Chr. XXI: 11, 12, it are only three years.—In II. Sam. XXIV: 24, David bought the threshing floor of Arauna for fifty shekels of silver, but in I. Chr. XXI: 25, it are six hundred shekels of gold.—In II. Sam. XXIV: 9, we found the number of fighting men, numbered by Joab, to be: 800.000 in Israel, and 500.000 in Judah; but in I. Chr. XXI: 5, there are 1,100.000 in Israel and 470.000 in Judah; while again in I. Chr. XXVII. 24, we are informed that Joab did never number the people, because of the wrath, even the number was never recorded in the book of the Chronicles of king David.—In II. Chr. IX: 25, we find that Solomon got 4000 stalls of horses and chariots, but in I. Kings IV: 26, it are not less than 40.000 stalls.—Again in II. Kings III: 1, we were informed that Jehoram reigned 12 years over Israel, while in II. Chr. XXI: 20, it are only 8 years.—In I Kings XVI: 8, we saw that Baasha, king of Israel, died in the 26th year of Asa, king of Judah, and was succeeded by Elah; but in II. Chr. XVI: 1, we read that in the 36th year of Asa, Baasha the king of Israel came up against Israel.—Thus, he did this ten years after his death.—Likewise we read in II. Chr. XXI: 20, that king Jehoram was forty years old when he died, yet in the next chapter, (v. 1-2,) we are told that the people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his stead, who was forty-two years old.—Accordingly the youngest son was two years older than his father.

And as instances of the nonsense, contained in these books, we may lead the attention of the reader to the genealogies wherewith the first book begins, and he will find it interlarded with some quite curious remarks. So we learn in I. Chr. IV: 21-23, that Shelah, the son of Judah, is the sire of the families of

those that make fine linen, and of the potters, and of all those that dwell among plants and hedges.—Then, when reading about the sons of Issachar and Benjamin and others, we are repeatedly told that they were valiant men of might in their generation; mighty men of valour; choice and mighty warriors; chiefs of princes; which is the more amusing after having read the preceding books whereby we were informed that these choice men of valour got, for the most times, beaten by their enemies.—Mattithiah, we see in I. Chr. IX : 31, one of the Levites, got the set-office over the things that are cooked in the pan.—After the genealogies follows a history of the kings of Israel. About David, we read in I. Chr. XI. that he had three mighty men in his army; their exploits are here recorded; their chieftain was Jashobeam, who alone slew three hundred men with his spear (v. 9.) and then, there was Abishai, a man who had a name among the three, for he also had slain by himself, three hundred men. Of the three, he was more honorable than the two; howbeit he attained not to the three (v. 20, 21). Benaiah was also a valiant man, for he slew two lion-like men of Moab, and once, on a snowy day, he slew a lion in a pit (v. 22).—In I. Chr. XII. we read that among those that came to David, while he was in Ziklag, there were many mighty warriors, for instances some Benjamites who fought with both hands, hurling stones with the one, while shooting arrows from a bow with the other hand (v. 2).—Proceeding with the perusal, we find how many mighty deeds David performed, and how many ten thousand enemies he slew; and moreover we learn again (in I. Chr. XX : 3) that he, after having taken the city of Rabbah, brought out the inhabitants, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. In the same manner he dealt, it is said, with all the cities of the children of Ammon. In another war, at Gath, there was a man of great stature, whose fingers and toes were four and twenty, six on each hand and six on each foot, he was the son of a giant, but Jonathan, a son of David's brother, slew him (v. 6–7).—Next (in Chapt. XXI.) we are made acquainted with the circumstance of David's numbering the people, and their number was found to be a million and one hundred thousand warriors in Israel, and four hundred and ninety thousand warriors in Judah. (Accordingly, David could dispose of an army of more than one and a half million of men. Quite a large army for such a puny kingdom as his; Russia herself, though rather a larger country, might find it difficult to get such an army together.) Because now, David had numbered the people, the Lord sent his angel to destroy Jerusalem; the angel, while spreading the pestilence, stood near the threshing floor of Ornan; David saw him standing there (v. 15–16).

The second book of the Chronicles is principally a repetition of the accounts of the kings of Judah, and commences with expatiating on Solomon and his temple building. It tells how the Lord offered him the choice of a present, and, how Solomon had exacted nothing more but wisdom, wherefor the Lord had promised him not only to give him that, but riches and honor besides. In consequence thereof Solomon had soon surpassed all the kings of the earth in wisdom

and riches, and had made the silver in Jerusalem become plentiful like stones, and the cedar trees as common as sycamore trees (Chapt. IX).—The following chapters treat of other kings, and relate us many galant deeds of the army of Judah. Once, for instance (in Chapt. XIV), we see that army totally routing an army of moors of not less than a million of men strong.—In another chapter (Chapt. XVIII.) we read a strange account of the prophets Zedekia and Micah; namely, Zedekiah made himself horns of iron and put them on; thus ornamented, he went out in company with four hundred other prophets and prophesied that Judah would lose the battle with the Syrians; but Micah, the prophet, being of a different opinion, said the Lord had put a lying spirit in him and the four hundred other prophets. Zedekia, revenged this affront by slapping Micah's face.—Reading further of many kings that did which is evil in the sight of the Lord we at last get at a king, with the name of Amaziah (in Chapt. XXV) that did which is right in the sight of the Lord. Also, he went up with his army of 300,000 picked men, able to war, that could handle spear and shield, and overtook the Edomites, and he beat them, and he slew ten thousand of them. Another ten thousand, not killed in the battle, were carried away and brought unto the top of a rock, and from there, they were thrown down, so that they all were smashed to pieces (v. 12).—Yet in Dent. XXIII: 7, it was forbidden to abhor an Edomite.—Continuing, we read of several kings more, who, nearly all, did which is evil in the sight of the Lord, until we come to king Zedekia (who also did which is evil in the sight of the Lord); this king would not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, and moreover he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar; the king of Babylon. Not only he, but all the people with him, transgressed greatly; and though the Lord sent them messengers, that rose up early in the morning, they sneered at them, and they abused the prophets. At last the wrath of the Lord was kindled to such a degree that there was no remedy left, and the Lord brought against them the king Nebuchadnezzar, who had no compassion, neither for old men nor maiden; and he burnt the city of Jerusalem, and he burnt the temple, and the inhabitants he carried away to Babylon to be servants to him (Chapt. XXXVI).—Herewith break the books of the Chronicles off; the final issue of what it relates, offers once more no particularly great evidence for the truth of all the once given high flowing promises, which Moses had given in the name of the Lord.

EZRA.

Ezra, a Jewish scribe, furnishes an account of Judah's return from their bondage in Babylon. He commences by relating that Cyrus, the king of Persia, had his spirit moved by the Lord, to allow the Jews to rebuild the house of the

Lord, the God of heaven, who is in Jerusalem (v. 1-3); this occurred in order that the words of Jeremiah the prophet should be fulfilled,—unfortunately though Jeremiah never spoke of Cyrus.—Cyrus however stirred up, and ordered that the Jews should be left free, and even provided them with the necessary means. The Jews accordingly went under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, carrying with them the golden and silver vessels formerly belonging to the house of God, who is in Jerusalem. A long list is given of all the families who formed part of the expedition. The other inhabitants of the land of Judah, then perceiving that the Jews were reconstructing the House of the Lord, evinced a desire not only to lend their aid, but also to serve the same God. This was declined by the children of Israel, and hence a bitter opposition and interference on the part of those natives; they lodged a formal complaint against those proceedings with Artaxerxes, a successor of Cyrus, stating, that the Jews had come to rebuild the bad and rebellious city of Jerusalem, that if that city be rebuilt, the Jews would not pay toll, tribute or custom, for as the records would show, it had been always a rebellious city raising against the kings and hurtful unto the provinces, and they had moved sedition within the same from the earliest times, for which cause that city was destroyed. (Chapt. IV : 12-16). The king's answer was that a search was made and the records did show that that city since the earliest period of its existence, had always made insurrection against the kings, and rebellion and sedition had been practised therein, wherefore he ordered that the rebuilding should not take place.—These letters, reported by Ezra an Israelite himself, prove conclusively that the destruction of Jerusalem was not owing to the worship of Baalzebub, as the books of the Kings and Chronicles will have it, but to the turbulent and rebellious spirit of its inhabitants.

Afterwards under the reign of another king (Darius) the Jews were again allowed to prosecute the work commenced, and Ezra was this time commissioned to superintend the reconstruction, in order that prayer might be offered in the house of the Lord, who is in Jerusalem, for the king and his house. On his arrival at Jerusalem Ezra soon discovered, that the Jews, who had returned the first, had inter-married with daughters of Canaanites, Hethites, Moabites and other tribes, this discovery grieved him exceedingly; he rent his clothes, and pulling his hair and beard, contemplated a whole day the wickedness of the people. In the evening he offered up a moving prayer, asking forgiveness for his people from the Lord. The elders moved by the conduct of Ezra, assembled to deliberate on this important question, and then after Ezra's suggestion, unanimously resolved upon carting off their foreign wives and children; which resolution they executed.—Excepting the cruel treatment of those women and children, this book would prove that Ezra entertained some better ideas of religion than former leaders of that people of the Lord. We not only never hear him excite them to murder and plunder, but even the language he used generally was more moderate. His style of writing is also superior and much more regular than that of the preceding books; altogether it would appear from this book that the Jews during the period of their bondage in Babylon, had at last acquired

somewhat sense of religion and of civilization.—Although now the Jews were returned to their holy land, they still remained subject to the Persian monarch. This fact may be borne in mind by those who believe in the prophecy of Shiloh ; and they may notice that Judah remained henceforth without an independent government of their own.

NEHEMIAH.

Nehemiah, a Jewish captive, was employed at the court of Artaxerxes, king of Persia ; he once learned of the miseries of the Jews, who were in Judah, and of the destruction of the walls and the city of Jerusalem. The report afflicted him greatly, and he offered up a prayer to the Lord of heaven in behalf of Judah.—His prayer is recorded here, and consist, as Ezra's did, in regular and comprehensible language. As Moses, however, had never taught his people to pray, it is remarkable that Nehemiah did pray ; therefore it is proper to suppose that the Jews must have assumed this custom from the Persians. Those hated sun-worshippers, thus, will have taught them a principal point of modern religion. Ezra and Nehemiah also address themselves to the Lord of heaven, which, though conveying a heathenish idea, still sounds a great deal more reasonable than to speak of a Lord of Israel, which of course implied absolute exclusiveness of a God of their own, forgetting the rest of human kind. They besides address this God of heaven as ready to pardon, as gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness ; the Lord of Israel to the contrary was merely a God of blood and murder, of jealousy and vengeance. Moreover, Ezra and Nehemiah do not pretend to talk to the Lord in person, as the priests and prophets did formerly, but they limit themselves to praying.

Nehemiah growing sick from grief, the king asked him for the cause of it, and having learned it, he gave him leave to return to Jerusalem, in order to rebuild the city and the temple ; moreover, he appointed him governor of Jerusalem. Nehemiah went and rebuilt the city ; in this he was frequently disturbed by the neighboring tribes, but nevertheless he succeeded at last. Further Nehemiah relates to us how Ezra gave to the inhabitants of Jerusalem religious instruction, by lecturing on every Sabbath-day from the books of Moses, and explaining the same to the congregation ; closing his meetings with a prayer.—This manner of keeping divine service again shows us that some taste for civilization in matters of religion had arisen among the Jews, for we remember that the divine service of their ancestors consisted of nothing else but of a wholesale butchery of cattle, and a show of priestly banqueting. Thus, on a whole, we may derive from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah that the religious sentiment among the Jews had improved eminently since they had lived among the

Persians, and that we may date from that time the purification of their religion of the barbarism which originally belonged to it.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

Esther was a young Jewess, whom Ahasuerus, a king who reigned from India unto Ethiopia, took as his wife. Once namely, it happened that this king being drunk when giving an entertainment, the queen Vashti refused to obey his command to show herself before his intoxicated friends. Hence the king repudiated her, and ordered his servants to look for the handsomest virgin in the land, who should fill the place of the queen, after she should have been kept ten months in the house of the king's women, to be anointed with sweet oil. Esther was the fortunate virgin that was chosen. She had a cousin who brought her up named Mordecai, he no sooner heard of the king's preference for Esther, when he appears to have thought himself a great man, for, when he came to the palace to see how Esther was doing, he refused to bow before Haman, who was next to the king, and higher than the Seven Princes of Persia and Media. Haman, intending to put his pride down, obtained from the king a permission to destroy the Jews. The orders were issued, and all Jews on hearing it put themselves in sackcloth and ashes, and very likely would never have come out of it again if not fortunately for them Mordecai informed the queen Esther of their danger, and made her believe they would kill her too. The affair took now a different turn. Not only was the general order cancelled, but Haman was ordered to be hanged, and besides, a day was fixed for the Jews for settlement with those that hated them. Of this privilege they fully availed themselves by executing ten sons of Haman, and a large number of the king's subjects besides. The king asked Esther if she was satisfied. She then wished another such glorious day of murder, which the king granted. Mordecai thereafter got Haman's place.—This interesting story is most probably an exaggerated account of something that actually took place; no historian, however, has ever been able to give the exact time of this occurrence, seeing that no Ahasuerus is known in history; moreover, it is not likely that the subjects of that king should have allowed themselves to be killed by the Jews, who were their slaves, and comparatively few in number. We let thus this story go for what it is worth.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

There was once a man with the name of Job, living in a land called Uz. That man was perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil. Seven sons were born unto him and three daughters, and his cattle consisted of seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and he had a very large number of servants, so that this man was greater than all the sons of the east. And his sons used to prepare feasts in the house, but Job, instead of feasting, offered burnt-offerings. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. The Lord then said unto Satan : whence comest thou ? Satan answered : from walking to and fro on the earth. And the Lord said : hast thou considered my servant Job ? Satan then answered that it was not for naught that Job was so perfect and upright, this he was because the Lord had blessed him with all kinds of blessings, but if the Lord would take away all he had, then the Lord would see if he should not curse him to his face. The Lord thereupon wished to make the trial, and gave Satan leave to do with Job what he liked, only he should not kill him. Satan immediately went to work, first he caused Job's sons and daughters to die by some accident, then he caused Job's cattle and asses to be stolen by the Chaldeans ; but Job said : naked came he out of his mother's womb, and naked he would return thither.—A rather difficult performance.—After this Satan struck him with a sore inflammation, so that Job had to take a potsherd to scrape himself therewith, and he sat himself down in the ashes. Job's wife wanted him to curse God and die, but Job said : what ? should we accept the good alone from God and the evil we should not accept ? With all this Job did not sin with his lips.—When now the three friends of Job had heard of all the evil that had come over him, they came to condole with him, and they sat down with him for seven days and seven nights, but no one spake a word unto him. After this time Job opened his mouth and cursed the day when he was born, and wished that day blotted out. The friends of Job then began also to speak each in his turn ; they all talked very wise, and were of opinion that Job must have sinned greatly, and that his present unfortunate state was the punishment for it, they besides had plenty to say about the wonderful might and great righteousness of the Lord. Job in the meantime spoke also a good deal, declaring his innocence, and uttering his opinion that his friends were troublesome comforters. This conversation, which is entirely written in highly poetical style, having lasted a long while, the Lord himself began to speak also (in chap. XXXVIII) ; he addressed Job out of a storm-wind, and said : “ who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge ? ”—This of course meant that Job spoke without knowledge,—and then in order to make him thoroughly conceive that his understanding was not great, the Lord asked him several questions to answer. As, for instance, “ where wast thou (Job) when I laid the foundation of the earth ? declare ” (v. 4), “ whereupon are these founda-

tions fastened, and who laid the corner-stone?" (v. 5). "Who shut up the sea with doors when it broke forth (as if) it had issued out of the womb?" (v. 8).—The Lord then, without waiting for answer, continued his questions, even began a new chapter (chap. XXXIX) "Knowest thou (Job) the time when the wild goats bring forth?" he asked, (in v. 1), and "who hath sent out the wild ass free, and who hath loosened the bands of the wild ass?" (v. 5). Wilt the unicorn be willing to serve thee (Job), or abide by thy crib? (v. 10). Wilt thou trust him because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labor to him? (v. 11). Hast thou (Job) given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? (v. 19). Canst thou (Job) make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible (v. 20). He saith among the trumpets, Ha! ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting (v. 25).—Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom? (v. 26).—After the Lord had made a few more such energetical questions, Job answered in (chapter XL) : "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." The Lord, however, desired Job should behave himself like a man, and answer the following questions : Had Job an arm like God, and could he thunder with a voice like him? Whether Job could deck himself with majesty and excellency, and array himself with glory and beauty, and could humble the proud and tread down the wicked, then the Lord was willing to confess that Job could save himself (v. 9-14). But behold, the Lord knew that Job was not even able to subdue the Behemoth, who eateth grass as the ox, and whose strength is in his loins, and whose force is in the navel of his belly, he moveth his tail like a cedar, the sinews of his stones are wrapped together; etc. (v. 15-18). Could Job (the Lord asks in the next chapter, XLI) draw out Leviathans with a hook? or his tongue with a cord? Could Job put a hook into his nose, or bore his jaws through with a thorn? Would the leviathan make many supplications unto Job, would he speak soft words unto him? Would Job play with him as with a bird, or would Job bind him for his maiden? Could Job fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears? The Lord intended not to conceal the power of the leviathan, nor his comely proportions, for who could come to him with a double bridle? His teeth were terrible all around, and his scales were his pride. By his sneezing a light doth shine, and his eyes are as the eyelids of the morning. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke like out of a seething pot or a cauldron. His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. Sharp stones are under him; he spreadeth sharp-pointed things upon the mire. He maketh the deep boil like a pot; he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.—Job after having heard all the wonderful might of the leviathan, declared (in chap. XLII), that he understood not the things which were too wonderful for him, therefore he would not speak, but chastise himself and repent in dust and ashes.—The Lord being greatly pleased with Job's act of humility, blessed him by giving him fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses, and another seven sons and three daughters.

This book of Job, as is plainly to perceive, forms a highly interesting biblical part. It bears all marks of being written under the influence of the spirit, by some very spiritual individual! The most interesting what we learn from it, is principally the existence of some beings that otherwise would not have been known in the natural history. For instance, it acquaints us with a creature, called Satan, who walks to and fro on the earth; further it acquaints us with the Behemoth, and with the Unicorn, and with the Leviathan, being that all four creatures never seen by any human eye. Especially the acquaintance with Satan is of great importance, seeing that he plays a great part in the New-testament, and thus, to understand that book we must know him. From what we discover here about him, it appears that he is a son of God, conversing in a most familiar style with his father when he calls upon him in heaven, but for the rest keeping his abode on the earth, where he busies himself with trying to entice mankind to do evil. How Satan can amuse himself in that way is quite incomprehensible, seeing that he gives himself thereby a great deal of trouble without having any benefit of it; this queer inclination of his, besides of being troublesome for himself, must also be a nuisance for mankind; as God however seems, since Job's time, to have banished from the earth the Behemoth, and the Unicorn, and the Leviathan, as they are no more to be found, so we will hope that God will also have had the kindness of banishing from it the troublesome man Satan, whose manner of evil-doing we so plainly learn from this instructive book.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

David, the mighty king and hero of Israel, gathered not only the laurels on the field of battle, but also on the field of sacred poetry; he was a great man; this is proved by the many divine songs, called psalms, which he has left behind. Perusing those psalms it is plainly to be seen that this hero supposed to please his God by making or singing him agreeable words of poetry; principally the abundance of flatteries that the poet-king mingled in the hymns, must have sounded exceedingly pleasing to the great God of Israel, and we therefore ought to believe that the king David knew pretty well how to coax this Lord.—In most of the psalms, David exhibits, by means of a surer abundance of positive assurances, his intimate friendship with the Lord, and his confidence in the Lord's assistance against his enemies. In psalm II. for instance, he assures that how much the heathens (the other nations) may rage, and the kings and the rulers of the earth (that is, of Canaan) may take counsel against the Lord and his anointed king (David), he (the Lord) that sitteth in heaven shall laugh, and say: still have I set my king (David) upon my holy hill of Zion (David's city). Then again David asserts that the Lord had said unto him: "thou art my son this day have I be-

gotten thee." Therefore he (David) advises the other kings to be wise and to kiss the son (him David), lest he be angry and they all perish on the way when his wrath is kindled.—The pious Christians have seen in that psalm a prophecy upon Jesus, because the word of *son* was used here; in Exod. IV : 22, however is to be read who is called the son of the Lord. "*Israel is my son*," said the Lord. David now as king of Israel, as the chief of that chosen people, thought himself entitled to appropriate the name of son to himself, and now boasting upon that name of honour he advises the other kings of the surrounding countries to make peace with him lest his wrath be kindled and he destroy them. Upon Jesus those words can not at all be applied, seeing that Jesus never was set king upon the hill of Zion; nor was Jesus' kindled wrath ever able to make kings and rulers perish; what is more, instead of kissing him, we see some ruler, meet the capital punishment out to him, without perishing therefore; what they surely would have done if Jesus' anger had been so fierce as that of the son depicted by David. The phrase of "this day have I begotten thee" has in view the alleged renewed friendship of the Lord for the people of Israel since David was their king. It could not refer to Jesus because he instead of being begotten that day, was begotten many centuries later.—In the same way psalm XXII. had been regarded by pious believers as containing some prophecy upon their dear lord Jesus, and that on account of David's commencing his hymn with the words: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and this ejaculation now was also used by Jesus on the cross. That this same ejaculation has been, and is yet, uttered by thousands of men, when in despair, those pious believers choose not to notice; and that moreover, since Jesus often repeats words of the old testament, his saying may rather be accepted as his repeating words of David than as a prophecy in the psalm,—this likewise they are not willing to perceive.—King David continues his psalm in a lamenting tone, in this tone he sung when beaten by his enemies the Philistines, as we discover in many of his songs; this time he says complaining: "I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All those that see me, laugh to scorn me; they shoot out the lips, they shake the head, saying: he trusted the Lord that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him" (v. 6-8).—David being accustomed to return victorious from the battle, supposed the people would laugh at him now that this once he returned defeated; they would also laugh at his boastings that the Lord should deliver him, while this time the Lord had forsaken him. That this is the meaning of what David says is plain, nevertheless the faithful Christian sees here a prophecy of what occurred to Jesus while hanging on the cross. Still more he feels himself convinced of it when he reads some verses further on: "for dogs have surrounded me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me, they pierce my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare at me. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture (v. 16-18)."—The dogs are, of course, the Jews surrounding the cross, who pierced his hands and feet with nails; and the phrase "I may tell all my bones" means, according to the good Christian, that Jesus was naked on the cross.

(for of a naked man we may, provided he is very lean, tell his ribs). In order now that the good Christian may comprehend what David referred to when speaking of his bones, we advise him to look into I. Chron. XI : 1, and he shall find out that it means David's people. So too when David poetically speaks of his garments and vesture he signifies with that his cities and fortified places; that is, he means here to say that his enemies divide among themselves his country and cast already lot for Jerusalem. That David speaking of his cities calls them his garments can be observed in psalm CXXXVII : 7.—That the Roman oldiers who executed the sentence of Jesus, divided among themselves his garments, was not a fact worthy to be prophesied, seeing that this happened always among the Romans at every execution, because the executioner became owner of the apparel of the defunct. Thus if David had intended to prophesy, he instead of standing by such trifles would rather have prophesied Jesus' death and resurrection. And what regards the words : " they pierced my hands and my feet," in that place we find in the Jewish bible translation : " like lions they threaten my hands and my feet." With his hands and his feet, David alludes to his officers and soldiers, in the same way as he styled his people his flesh and bones. There is therefore no prophecy to be looked for in this psalm.

All the prophecies the Christian produce, wheresoever they may have taken them, are picked up in a very arbitrary manner out of the midst of some phrases, that often very plainly refer to some other matter ; and since now the psalms are mostly rather incoherent language, the picking of prophecies out of them is made very easy, the more so because David made a good number of psalms so that the amateur of prophecies has plenty of choice. For instance in Psalm LXIX : 21, David, while complaining of the rough manner in which his enemies treated him, says : " they gave me gall for my meat and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." This then is considered as a prophecy referring to Jesus, because he, while hanging on the cross, was refreshed by a sponge with vinegar. Such assertions are however too far-fetched to be believed by any one who has common sense; and as with this, it is with all the other prophecies picked up in the psalms—we therefore will not stop any longer by them.

The psalms are, for the rest, not regarded as generally containing prophecies, (for those that are said to contain them are but exceptions which David most likely made in his brighter moments !) but they are regarded as hymns made to glorify the Lord. In many of them David however glorifies more himself than the Lord, and in each of them he makes great show of his intimacy with the Lord and his firm confidence in the Lord, but then soon again fearing that the Lord might perhaps forget him, he prays him with entreating words to be ever near by, and never to forsake him. Then again he flatters the Lord by giving him pompous titles and by relating what grand deeds the Lord has done or will do ; having in that way coaxed, as he thinks, the Lord in his favor, he requests of him to kill (David's) enemies, who, of course he believes also to be enemies to the Lord, and who he therefore calls evil men ; the manner in which he wishes the Lord to kill them, is besides quite efficacious, as for instance in

psalm CXL he prays, "let burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again." The psalms are full of such requests to the Lord, their morals is consequently not very admirable; and as they are besides, when looked upon as pieces of poetry, quite worthless, we cannot suppose that the Lord ever can have been much pleased with those songs of David. But seeing that the Lord of Israel, that is, the God of the bible, had strange tastes, we still may be mistaken; but this at least we surely know, that nobody ought to believe that he, by singing those pitiful hymns, will ever place himself thereby in any higher estimation of that being, called Supreme being, who is the God of nature; for that God is certainly too wise to allow himself to be coaxed by any hymn, how beautiful or flattering it might be made.

THE PROVERBS.

Solomon, of whom is written (in 1 Kings, IV : 30, 31) that he was wiser than all men, has also composed a number of quaint proverbs, to (as he says) know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity, to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.—Solomon, after that introduction, commences with his proverbs, in which, especially in the first chapters, the words of wisdom and knowledge and understanding are over-sufficiently repeated. If, however, his repeating at any time those words to his son (where-with he probably meant his people), could be able to produce wisdom and understanding, we rather doubt, seeing that it is not enough to tell a man to get wisdom, as he only will become wise by real wise instruction, and this we do not believe to be found in the proverbs. The wisdom which Solomon referred to may, however, have been of another kind than the wisdom of the present age; for, in one of his first proverbs, Solomon says: "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Now, the beginning of knowledge of the present day is in no way the fear of the Lord, but consist in a clear mind and the study of science. The fear of the Lord, which is the fear of the bible-god, (the bugbear wherewith the priests and all prelates care the people out of their wits), is entirely opposed to all cultivation of intellect, for as soon as a man has exercised his intellect and understands something about the system of nature, he perceives that the Lord, with whose name they try to frighten him, is but an imposition, and that the God who really rules nature is not the whimsical fool they endeavor to press upon his mind, but is a Being of rationality, a Being that he may love, but is not obliged to fear with unnecessary apprehensions, since it is possessed of rational intellect. The priest has no power any more over such a man of intelligence, and he knows this, and being afraid of losing the priestly in-

fluence, tries as much as he can to suppress all that knowledge apt to enlighten the human mind. Hence that the fear of the Lord (that is, the fear of the God of the priests), is totally inconsistent with substantial knowledge. Experience, too, has proved that no devotee has ever been of any utility to science and knowledge. It have been men without tendency to over-devotedness who have brought the world to her present state of perfection, while the devotee has never been of any use but to be imposed upon by the priest and other hypocrites. We therefore boldly declare that Solomon, how wise he may have been, was mistaken in this point.

To give further a proof of Solomon's wisdom, and of the manner how he thought to imbue subtilty to the simple and knowledge and understanding and discretion to the young, we will merely content ourselves with giving some of his proverbs intended to instruct. (Taken from the Bible of the American Bible Society).

CHAPTER II.—My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ;—so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding ;—yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ;—if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures ; thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, etc. (v. 1-6.)

CHAPTER III.—Be not wise in thine own eyes ; fear the Lord, and depart from evil ;—it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.—Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine income (v. 7-9.).

CHAPTER IV.—Get wisdom, get understanding ; forget it not ; neither decline from the words of my mouth.—Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee : love her, and she shall keep thee.—Wisdom is the principal thing ; therefore get wisdom ; and with all thy getting get understanding (v. 5-7).

CHAPTER V.—My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding,—that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge,—for the lips of a strange woman drop as a honey-comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil : but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword (v. 1-4).

CHAPTER VI.—These six things doth the Lord hate ; yea, seven are an abomination unto him : a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood—a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief—a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.—My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the laws of thy mother,—bind them upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck (v. 16-21).

CHAPTER VII.—Keep my commandments, and live ; and my law as the apple of thine eye,—bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart (v. 1-3).

CHAPTER VIII.—Doth not wisdom cry ? and understanding put forth her voice ? She standeth on the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.—She cries at the gates at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors ; Unto you, O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of man.—O ye simple, understand wisdom ; and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart (v. 1-5).

CHAPTER IX.—Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars : she hath killed her beasts ; she hath mingled her wines ; she hath also furnished her table.—She hath sent forth her maidens ; she crieth upon the highest places of the city :—Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither ; as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him—Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled (v. 1-5).

CHAPTER X.—The wise in heart will receive commandments ; but a prating fool shall fall.—He that walketh uprightly walketh surely ; but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.—He that winketh with the eyes causeth sorrow ; but a prating fool shall fall (v. 9-11).

CHAPTER XI.—A false balance is abomination to the Lord ; but a just weight is his delight.—When pride cometh, then cometh shame ; but with the lowly is wisdom (v. 1-2).

CHAPTER XII.—The wicked desireth the net of evil men ; but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit (v. 12).

CHAPTER XIII.—The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing ; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat (v. 4).

CHAPTER XIV.—The crown of the wise is their riches ; but the foolishness of fools is folly.—A true witness delivereth souls ; but a deceitful witness speaketh lies (v. 24-25).

CHAPTER XV.—A wholesome tongue is a tree of life ; but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit (v. 4).

CHAPTER XVI.—A just weight and balance are the Lord's ; all the weights of the bag are his work (v. 11).

CHAPTER XVII.—The fining-pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold ; but the Lord trieth the hearts (v. 3).

CHAPTER XVIII.—A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth : and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled (v. 20).

CHAPTER XIX.—Also, that the soul be without knowledge, is not good ; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth (v. 2).

CHAPTER XX.—The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly (v. 27).

CHAPTER XXI.—The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead (v. 16).

CHAPTER XXII.—The mouth of strange women is a deep pit : he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein (v. 14).

CHAPTER XXIII.—For a whore is a deep ditch ; and a strange woman is a narrow pit (v. 27).

CHAPTER XXIV.—My son, eat thou honey, because it is good ; and the honey-comb is sweet to thy taste (v. 13),

CHAPTER XXV.—It is not good to eat much honey ; so for men to search their own glory is not glory (v. 27).

CHAPTER XXVI.—The legs of the lame are not equal, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

CHAPTER XXVII.—Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him (v. 22).

CHAPTER XXVIII.—He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife, but he that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made fat (v. 15).

CHAPTER XXIX.—The bloodthirsty hate the upright : but the just seek his soul (v. 10).

CHAPTER XXX.—This chapter, though added to the book of the proverbs, which is attributed to Solomon, seems, however, not to be composed by him, for its first verse informs us that it are the words of Agur that he spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal. He assures them that he is more brutish than any other man, and possesses no common understanding, neither has he learned wisdom, nor has he the knowledge of the holy. Having thus put forth his opinion concerning himself, he proffers some questions on geology, which he mixes up with some religious sentences ; then again he informs us that there exists a gener-

ation that curses their father and do not bless their mother ; a generation whose teeth are as swords, and whose jaw-teeth as knives, to swallow the poor from off the earth and the needy from among the men (v. 11-14). After that highly interesting information Agur says at once that the horseleech has two daughters, named : " Give, Give." And there are three things, he says, that are never satisfied, yea four things say not " it is enough " to wit : the grave, the barren womb, the earth that is never filled with water, and the fire (v. 15). There are also three things that are too wonderful for Agur, yea four that he know not, to wit : the way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid (v. 19). And four things are little upon the earth, according to his opinion, and are exceedingly wise, to wit : the ant, the cony, the locust, and the spider (v. 25-28). There are also three things which go well, yea four are comely in going, to wit : a lion, a grey-hound, a he-goat, and a victorious king (v. 29-31). Agur having in that manner exhibited his lack of common sense, ends his instruction by declaring that the churning of milk brings forth butter, the wringing of the nose bring forth blood, and so does the forcing of wrath bring forth strife.

CHAPTER XXXI.—This chapter contains the instructions of the mother of king Lemuel to her son, to wit : he should not give his strength unto women, nor drink too much wine ; but look out for a virtuous wife. Thereupon follows a classification of all the good qualities which that wife must possess.—Though now we cordially hope that Lemuel may have found a wife as his mother recommended him, we still do not see why this chapter is added to the proverbs.

About the wisdom, and knowledge, and understanding, and discretion, to be drawn from Solomon's instructions of wisdom, called proverbs, we let the reader judge for himself, and will proceed to another book of that exceedingly wise king.

ECCLESIASTES ; OR THE PREACHER.

The son of David, the king of Jerusalem, styles himself this time the Preacher. Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity, saith the Preacher. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun ? One generation passeth away, and another cometh, but the earth remains forever (Chapt. I. v. 1-4). The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, see, this is new, it hath been already of olden times which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things ; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those

that shall come after (v. 9-11).—This view of Solomon's (for it is understood that Solomon was the author of this book) that a man has no profit of all his labour, and that no remembrance of it will remain, is not exactly to be called a very religious view of the matter, but merely that of one who does not look beyond this world. We therefore would have expected of a holy man as Solomon, that he knew that existence is given to man in this world to prepare for another; it seems however that Solomon's understanding did not reach so far.—The preacher gave his heart to seek and search out by wisdom all things that are done under heaven, and behold, he found that all of it was vanity and vexation of spirit. And he gave also his heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly, and he perceived that this also is vexation of spirit, for in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow (v. 13-18).—This hypochondriacal view concerning the wisdom, is not at all coherent with all the entreaties the king gave to his son in the first chapter of the proverbs, when he asserted that wisdom is the principal thing (for instance in Proverbs IV : 5-7), now on the contrary he plainly gives to understand that dullness should be preferred.—The preacher declares in Chapt. II. that he tried also all kind of mirth and folly, even gave himself unto wine, he also built himself houses, planted gardens and orchards, got servants and maidens, and had servants born in his house, and gathered silver and gold and peculiar treasures, and got himself singers and women-singers, and delights of all sorts, and he was great, more so than all that were before him in Jerusalem, then he looked on all the labour that he had laboured to do, and behold, it was all vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. Then, he compared the wisdom and the folly, and he saw that wisdom excelleth folly as light the darkness, but when again observing that the same events happeneth to the wise man as to the fool, and that the wise man dies as well as the fool, and that his memory will be forgotten as well as that of the fool, then again he saw that all was vanity and vexation of spirit; and he came to the conclusion that there is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and should make his soul enjoy the good of his labour. This Solomon saw was from the hand of God (Chapt. II. v. 24).—In the next Chapter, we find again that Solomon after some more meditations comes to the conviction that it is the gift of God that every man shall eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labour (v. 13.) Solomon also perceived that that which befalleth men befalleth beasts, as the one dieth, so dieth the other, they have all one breath, so that a man has no preeminence above a beast, they all are vanities, therefore Solomon concludes that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion (v. 19-22). Solomon moreover considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and beheld the tears of all those that are oppressed, and he saw they had no comforter, he therefore praiseth the dead who were already dead, but still more he praiseth those that had never been born, and had not seen the evil that is done. And further considering the right work that is done, Solomon saw, that a man is envied for that, so that he finds this also to be vanity and vexation of spirit

(chapt. IV : 1-4).—Coming to this point the preacher commences on a sudden to give a large number of incoherent proverbs, having nothing to do with his observations ; with these proverbs he continues till the end of the book, when he winds up by saying : “ let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter : fear God, and keep his commandments ; for this is the whole duty of man” (chapt. XII : 13).—Though this conclusion of the preacher sounds rather plausible, we however cannot perceive that Solomon in his preaching said a single word to prove the truth of his conclusion, so that we do not understand how he could get to it.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

Several chapters of this song are headed in the old English translation as follows : “The love of the Church to Christ.—Mutual love of Christ and his Church.—The Church’s fight and victory.—Christ sheweth the Church her grace.—Christ awaketh the Church.—The Church’s faith in Christ,” etc.—Seeing that there is not the slightest intimation in any of Solomon’s writings of the arrival of a Christ, nor the slightest allusion made to the Christ in this song, we therefore deem it useful to let the public notice that those headings were unquestionably placed there without Solomon’s authority ; we also do not find them in the Hebrew bible, nor in the later English translations. This song is evidently nothing but a piece of poetry, in which Solomon sings the love of a young pair of lovers, without having in view any peculiar religious notion. It is worth being read, whereas it is quite amusing on account of the original comparisons coming forth in it.—For instance, in chapter I, the lover compares his bride to a team of horses in Pharaoh’s chariot, for her cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, and her neck with chains of gold. The bride then answers : a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me, he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. The lover says again in his turn : behold, thou art fair, my love, thou hast dove-eyes, behold thou art fair, yea pleasant, also our bed is green.—Since now a bed is here in demand, it is plain enough that this song has nothing in common with the pretended love of Christ for his Church. We wonder, therefore, how the pious bible-translators ever could get to such a notion.—In chapt. II : 14, the lover observes to his love that they are in the cleft of a rock, in a secret place, and therefore he begs her to uncover her countenance. She then says : my beloved is mine, and I am his!—In chapt. III, the bride complains that she once at night sought her lover on her bed, but he was gone, she went up in search of him, and found him, and would not let him go until he came back with her.—In chapt. IV the lover declares once more that she, his love, is fair, her eyes are as dove-eyes ; her hair is as a flock of goats : her teeth are as a flock of sheep just shorn ; her lips are as a thread of scarlet ; her temples are as

a piece of pomegranate, and her neck as a tower of David, whereon are hanging a thousand bucklers and shields, etc.—In chapt. V the bride complains again that her beloved has left her; the daughters of Jerusalem now made a sport of her, and asked if her lover proved to be any better than the others; the bride thereupon, to excuse herself for her love, answers: my beloved is white and ruddy, his head is as fine gold, his eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices. His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, and his mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely (v. 10–16).—In chapt. VI we perceive that the lover is coming back again, saying he preferred his love above three score of queens and four score of concubines, she is fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army of banners.—In chapt. VII the lover says moreover, how beautiful are thy feet with shoes . . . thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor; thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies; thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins; thy neck is a tower of ivory; thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon; thy nose is like the tower on the Lebanon; thy head is like Carmel; and thy hair is like purple, etc.—In chapt. VIII the bride is wishing that her lover was her little brother, sucking at the breast of her mother, then she would be allowed to kiss him without being despised. And a few lines further, somebody, (probably the mother.) asks: “who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree, there thy mother brought thee forth.”—On account of that coming up leaning upon the arm of her beloved, we suppose that this pair of lovers has gone out to get married, and now returned home as husband and wife. The poetical genius of Solomon, as every reader will acknowledge, deserves all admiration, and accordingly it is not at all astonishing that his cotemporaries placed this beautiful song into their holy book.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

CHAPTER I.—Isaiah was a man of visions, who lived, as can be observed from the books of the Kings, and from his own book, in the time when Israel and Judah were in continual war with the Assyrians, in consequence of which war Israel was carried away in servitude, while Judah bought herself free with the gold from the temple. It was in the days of Jotham, Uzziah, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, that Isaiah spoke his prophecies and performed his miracles, and principally during the reign of the latter, as is evident in II Kings, XX. The war with the Assyrians which could have great consequences, was without doubt an important subject to monopolise a Jewish man's attention; and seeing that Isaiah in his long career could watch the course the things took,

it is no wonder, of course, that he made his own calculations of what would be the end of it. Those opinions of his, written in prophetic style (of which style Moses had given the example), are called prophecies. They, however, as we will see, have not foretold a single truth.—In the first chapter Isaiah represents the Lord as complaining that the people of Israel do not know him, the oxen know their master, but they do not, therefore the Lord has caused their country to be destroyed and their cities to be burnt by strangers; so that Jerusalem is left by herself, like a cottage in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber-garden, like a besieged city (v. 8).—What Isaiah said here about Jerusalem was no prophecy, as it was so when he spoke.

CHAPTER II.—Isaiah communicates now that it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of all mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, "come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob," etc. (v. 2-3).—The trusting Christian bible-reader thinks to see in those words some mystic profound meaning, touching the future predominance of the Church of Christ. We therefore advise such to notice that Isaiah merely speaks here of the mount of Zion, whereon the temple was built; this mountain, says he should, eventually, be elevated above all mountains, and then the other nations should see and confess that the God of Israel was mightier than theirs. Isaiah, therewith, would give to understand that at last Jerusalem's temple would give the law to the other nations of Palestine; but he did not speak of the Christian creed, for the temple of Jerusalem and the Christian creed are very different things, and it can only be a confused mind who can confound the one with the other.

CHAPTER III.—Here we discover that the Lord, previous to elevating Zion's mountain so high, intended first to punish thoroughly all the inhabitants. The people should be oppressed every one by another, children should rule over them; and moreover, because the daughters of Zion were haughty, and did walk with stretched necks and wanton eyes, winking as they went, and making a tinkling with their feet, therefore the Lord would punish them, and uncover their secret parts, and take away all their ornaments the chains, the bracelets, the mufflers, the bonnets, the ornaments of the legs, the headbands, the tablets, the ear-rings, etc., and their lovers should all be killed by the sword.

CHAPTER IV.—"And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, we will eat (buy) our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach. In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for those that have escaped of Israel" (v. 1-2).—Some Christian explainers of the scriptures have deemed it proper to declare that "branch of the Lord" means Jesus Christ, and in that way they see here a

prophecy on the glorious reign of the son of God on earth. Therefore also we find in some bible translations this chapter headed, "the blessings of Christ's kingdom." As Isaiah, however, speaks here of a time when there would be almost nothing but widows and unmarried women in Jerusalem, on account of the men being killed by the sword, which was not the case in Jesus' time, nor will be the case when that alleged time comes of Jesus' return on the earth (for then all that once lived will arise from death, men as well as women), we, for our part, deem the choice of such prophecy very improper, and even too foolish to demonstrate how false it is. With the expression of "branch of the Lord," Isaiah had in view "Israel" the holy people of the Lord.

CHAPTER V.—This time Isaiah gives a song represented to be sung by a young woman, and having for subject the vineyard of her lover.—The song was intended to serve as a parable, to show that in the same way as the owner of the vineyard would act with his yard, the Lord should act with the kingdom of Israel.

CHAPTER VI.—Now Isaiah communicates that in the year of king Uzziah's death, he (Isaiah) saw the Lord sitting on a throne in the temple. Above the throne stood several seraphims, singing to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" They sang with such a strength of voice that the posts of the door were shattered by it. Isaiah, when seeing and hearing what was going on, said: "woe to me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; and mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Immediately thereupon a seraphim flew unto him, holding a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon Isaiah's mouth, declaring that henceforth his iniquity was taken away and his sins purged. The Lord then asked whom he should send to his people; Isaiah presently offered his service, and accordingly was appointed by the Lord his messenger unto the Lord's people. He at the same time was ordered by the Lord to make the heart of the people fat and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, so that they would neither hear, nor understand, nor be converted, until all their cities should be wasted and their land desolated.—We learn by this account in what manner Isaiah was appointed prophet by the Lord, and by which process his (never lying) lips were made clean, this indeed is instructive; but that the Lord at the same time had gotten such a fixed idea of destroying Israel's country, that he even would not allow the people to convert, is a sorry story to learn, as it is not fit to inspire much respect for that Lord of hosts of seraphims.

CHAPTER VII.—And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Uzziah, the king of Judah, that Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the king of Israel, went up to war against Jerusalem. Ahaz being informed that those kings had confederated against him was moved in his heart. The Lord observing this, sent Isaiah to tell him that he need not fear, and might be quiet, for the Lord

would protect him; Ephraim (the realm of the king of Israel), and also Syria, should both be punished for their evil plans. Ephraim should even be broken in 65 years that it should be no people more.—Whereas Ephraim was broken by the king of Assyria in the sixth year of Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, while Ahaz reigned but 16 years (as evident in II Kings XVI: 2, and XVIII: 10), so this being broken came to pass a good many years earlier than Isaiah prophesied; which of course proves not for the veracity of his prophecy.—Further, Isaiah in the name of the Lord permitted Ahaz to ask a sign as proof of the Lord's protection, but Ahaz refused, for he said he believed in it, and wished not to tempt the Lord. The Lord though, was very much disposed to give a sign, and therefore would give one any how, and that was: a virgin should conceive and bear a son, and should call his name Immanuel (v. 14), and before the child should know to reject the evil and choose the good, the countries that Ahaz abhorred should be bereft of both her kings (v. 16).—The faithful Christian sees in these words, of verse 14, a beautiful and very plain prophecy of his Lord Jesus. That those words were spoken to Ahaz, who lived about seven or eight centuries before Jesus, and were intended for a sign to him, they do not heed. There is spoken of a virgin that should bear a son, and this is enough for them to declare it a prophecy! Isaiah, however, says that the child should be called Immanuel, but the other child to whom the Christian want the prophecy to refer, was not called so, for it was called Jesus. This fact alone would be sufficient to show that the Christians are wrong, if it were not plain enough for any attentive reader to perceive that the promise was a special one given to Ahaz, to wit; one of his young women should conceive and bear a son, and before this child should be old enough to have any understanding, Ahaz should be freed from the attacks of king Rezin and king Pekah. In the Jewish bible we find also instead of 'a virgin shall conceive' . . . 'this young woman shall conceive.' Seeing that a woman that conceives may be a 'young woman,' but cannot any longer be called a 'virgin,' we are sure that the Jewish version is in this point more correct than the Christian.

CHAPTER VIII.—After that the Lord ordered Isaiah to take a great roll "and to write on it with a pen, concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz!"—In the Jewish version we read, "to write on it with distinct letters, Lemaher-shalal-chash-bas" (speedy booty. sudden spoil).—Isaiah having done that took with him two faithful witnesses, and went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said unto him, call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz, for before the child shall have knowledge to say, my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away by the king of Assyria.—From the former chapter we understood that a son should be born to Ahaz as a sign, but now it appears that Isaiah, in order to make the sign still more certain, did deem it fit to procreate a son to himself too; and fortunate it was that the prophetess, notwithstanding the presence of the two witnesses, did conceive at once, as such a child, procreated upon special order of the Lord

by a holy prophet and a prophetess, must of course be growing up a most remarkable prophet, and be quite an acquisition to the people of Judah, who were so fond of prophecies.

CHAPTER IX.—This time Jsaiah is more hopeful as to the future of the people, because a light is shining upon them, and they will rejoice as men rejoice when they divide the spoil; "for a child is born unto us," says the prophet, "unto us a son is given and the government shall be on his shoulder; and his name shall be called (according to the christian bible), Wonderful. Counsellor. The mighty God. The Everlasting Father. The Prince of peace."—According to the Jewish bible the name should be: "Wonderful counsellor of the mighty God, of the everlasting Father, the prince of peace."—The Christians see here again (in verse 6) a prophecy of Jesus, even when they read the next verse which says "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, etc." (v. 7). Jesus now never sat on the throne of David, and never delivered Judah of the Syrians, as we further see that this king should do. Jesus also could never be called, the prince of peace, seeing that he brought more war and strife than peace into the world; we therefore are sure that Jesaiah informs us here of the birth of the child spoken of in Chapt. VII, and this child he predicts shall succeed on the throne of David, (that is reign over Judah and Israel both) and be a great hero as David I. was, and accordingly deliver his country of all her enemies.

CHAPTER X.—This chapter headed by the translators "the woe of tyrants" treats of Assyria and its king, and that in no friendly spirit. This king (Salmannassar) appears however to have been doing well and to have extended his dominions with great success, notwithstanding the woe-cryings of Isaiah.—The Lord will also send that king against Judah, as he was before sent against Israel, but Judah shall find a mighty helper to deliver them from the Assyrian's yoke.—This deliverer, of course, cannot be Jesus of Nazareth, considering that he never fought, nor delivered anybody from the Assyrians. This promise consequently refers to the great hero, whose birth was announced in the preceding chapter.—Isaiah also promises here (in v. 20–22), that the remnant of Israel shall return from the Assyrian captivity.—This, as is well known, never took place, for instead of coming back, Israel's name died out in Assyria. The reader ought to keep in mind that Isaiah speaking of Israel, does not mean the people of Judah, for he makes a decided distinction between those two. The people of Israel, were the inhabitants of North Palestine, sometimes called Ephraim, of which Samaria was the capital. These inhabitants were already carried off to Assyria in the time Jesaiah spoke this so-called prophecy, as can be noticed from v. 11 of this chapter.

CHAPTER XI.—The prophet announces here that there is coming forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and the

spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (v. 1-2).—The Christian expounders see in those words and what follows a prophecy of Jesus, and his peaceful kingdom to come, especially because Jsaiah gives further to understand that under the reign of this rod out of the stem of Jesse the peace shall be so great that the wolf shall lie with the lamb, and the lion shall eat grass with the oxen, etc. We however cannot suppose that Jsaiah would have so little respect for a son of God as to call him a 'rod,' besides Jesus was not of the stem of Jesse, since he was the Son of the Holy Ghost. Furthermore Jesus never sat on the throne of David the son of Jesse, and even, without that, he brought no reign of peace in Israel. It is true that the Christian pretends that this time must yet come when Jesus shall be coming back again out of the clouds, but seeing that until now he has not come back, and has brought into this world instead of peace, war, massacres, burning on piles of live folks, poisoning, stabbing, and all kind of horrible cruelties, not to mention yet the intense ill-feeling amongst the different sects of Christians continually entertained by his contradictory doctrines, so we deem it right not to consider this chapter as a prophecy on him. Jsaiah intended to prognosticate that the reign of the young prince, whose birth he announced in Chapt. IX., should be one of peace, so great as Judah and Israel had never known before.—The prophet also promised that under the reign of that prince the Lord should assemble the remnants of Israel, and lead them back, along a highway, out of Assyria (v. 16).—This agreeable promise though was never fulfilled, nor ever can be fulfilled since the tribes of Israel all died out in Assyria.

CHAPTER XII.—The prophet gives here a song of thanksgiving that the people of Israel will sing in later days for all the anger the Lord once spitted upon them.

CHAPTER XIII.—Jsaiah predicts now that the city of Babylon shall be destroyed by the hosts of the Lord; the Lord himself shall be at the head of his army, and on that day of his fierce anger and wrath, the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof shall not give their light, and sun and moon shall be darkened, and the Lord shall punish the world for their evil, and cause the arrogance of the proud (Babylonians) to cease. The men shall flee as chased roes, but every man that the hosts of the Lord get hold of shall be pierced through by the sword, and their children shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.—We discover that the Lord had grand projects of revenge, but unfortunately for the prophecy nothing of all this has come to pass; for Babylon though no more existing at present, was still a growing and flourishing city for more than four centuries after Jsaiah. It was only when the city of Seleucia was built (307 before C.), that Babylon began to fall off, on account of the trade being transferred to the new city; since that time it lost its importance and decayed gradually, until it ceased to be a

city. Babylon has accordingly participated in the fate of all the cities of the old world, without ever having been destroyed by hosts of heaven. This nonsensical language of Jsaiah is nevertheless greatly admired by the bible-friends, for his cursing Babylon, affords them a proof that Isaiah got a prophetic foresight of the Babylonian exile that awaited the people of Judah. To explain Isaiah's hatred of that city, it is however sufficient to know that during his life, Jerusalem was attacked by the Assyrian king Sennacherib, and this king had chosen Babylon for his residence.

CHAPTER XIV.—The prophet prophesies again that the Lord will have mercy upon the people of Jacob and Israel; and the other nations who hold the Israelites in slavery should be in their turn slaves to them for all time to come.—Also this prophecy has not been fulfilled, nor ever will, seeing that the tribes of Israel have entirely been absorbed by the nations who held them in slavery.

CHAPTER XV. and XVI.—In those chapters the prophet bewailes the fate of the land of Moab. In Chapt. XVI, he exhorts Moab to allow the outcasts of Israel to dwell with her peaceably, for then shall the king who shall be established on the throne of David have mercy with Moab; but if she will not, then shall the glory of Moab be condemned within three years (v. 14).—This shows that Isaiah's great king David II. was expected to occupy the throne within three years; accordingly he was not the same as Jesus who until now has not yet sit on the throne of David.

CHAPTER XVII.—Here we are foretold of the destruction of Damascus, and such a total destruction as will only leave ruins.—In this also our prophet is mistaken, for Damascus is up to this present moment one of the principal cities of Asia.

CHAPTER XVIII.—Now the destruction of Ethiopia is threatened, though we are not informed what evil it had done.

CHAPTER XIX.—The fall of Egypt is also this time mentioned for a certainty.—This however did not take place, for Egypt increased in power, and remained long after Isaiah's time one of the greatest countries of antiquity, even holding the whole of Palestine for about a century.

CHAPTER XX.—The holy man, Jsaiah, relates us now that he, upon an order of the Lord, walked three years naked and barefooted, as a sign and wonder over Egypt and Ethiopia.—But what sign and wonder can there be in a naked prophet? Lunatics often show an inclination to divest themselves of their garments. No doubt that the people, who saw him walk about in his negligee and heard his astounding prophecies, must have been under the impression that he was totally crazy, and if so, then they will have been nearer the truth than thousands even of our generation, who in the raving language of Isa-

iah suppose to see divine inspiration, as if Divinity only could express herself in the language of a madman.

CHAPTER XXI.—Again, the destruction of Babylon is foreshown, as also the desolation of Arabia.—Aratia however has never experienced any consequences of Isaiah's ill-feeling towards her, seeing that she since got large and important cities, and is still in better condition than the holy land ever was.

CHAPTER XXII.—Jsaiah curses the valley of visions; and at the same time the city treasurer, named Shebna.

CHAPTER XXIII.—The overthrow of Tyre is now announced, though seventy years later Tyre should sing again, sing as a harlot, and she should commit fornication with all the kings of the world, and her merchandise and her hire should be holiness unto the Lord.—This manner of expressing must be very near the sublime, for we find it copied in the Revelation of St. John the divine, as applied there to the whore Babylon.

CHAPTER XXIV.—Jsaiah states how the Lord intends to make the land empty, to lay it waste, to turn it upside down; and the inhabitants were to be burned and only few should be left; then he suddenly cries: My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! The prophet's ideas are this time confused, perhaps even more so than before, the description of the general upsetting and burning of all things, and the throwing of live people in a pit of fire is terrible indeed, even the moon, he says, will be confounded and the sun ashamed.—This dreadful nonsense is considered by many christians as a prophecy on the day of Judgment, and the more so because we find something of the kind repeated in the Revelation of the New testament. We though, observe that Isaiah speaks only of the turning upside down of the countries in and around Palestine, and besides, we see in his language, as every unprejudiced mind will agree with us, plainly the foolish ravings of a person out of his senses. Yet those ravings we see copied by John, the divine saint, and applied by him to the destruction of the whole earth.

CHAPTER XXV and XXVI.—The prophet gives songs inviting to confidence in God, who will exalt the humble, and humble the proud. Thy dead men, he says, (XXVI: 19) shall live; together with my (Jsaiah's) dead body shall they arise!—This idea of resurrection of the body is also afterwards adopted by the christians; but Isaiah, instead of bringing the people to such queer ideas, would have done better by observing, that when life is departed, a dead body dissolves completely, and that its substance is taken up by other creatures in their food, serving thus to construe again several parts of other bodies; so that a resurrection of that body can never take place. Isaiah only refers to a resurrection of the dead Jews and Israelites, and this privilege being of course denied to Assyrians

and all other heathens, this resurrection cannot be the same alluded to by St. John the Divine.

CHAPTER XXVII.—The slaying by the sword of God is now promised to be done by the leviathan and the dragon of the sea ; (the Jews evidently shared the superstition of other cotemporary nations in regard to some mysterious land and sea-monsters, thought to be the authors of earthquakes and motions of the sea). Isaiah further predicts the gathering together, on the sound of trumpets, of all the descendants of Jacob and of the Israelites of Assyria, and their joint worship in Jerusalem.—From this it appears as plain as daylight, that Isaiah did not intend to convey the idea of a total destruction of this world ; but predicted the above mentioned events to take place during the captivity of Israel. The prophecies in the Revelation, are in that point an improvement on his.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—The prophet threatens Ephraim in his usual mysterious style ; one statement though is very plain, to wit in vs. 7, he says : " the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink ; they are swallowed up of wine ; they are out of the way through strong drink ; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment."—We now know what to think of their prophecies ; we dared not suggest, though we strongly suspected (inclined as we were to attribute the irregularities of style and language to natural causes) of their not being always under the influence of the right sort of spirit ; hence their wonderful visions, which for sober people are, throughout, incoherent nonsense.—And what regards the precious stone of Zion to be used as corner-stone for a sure foundation, of which Isaiah speaks in v. 16 ; this cannot be an allusion to Jesus, as the christians pretend, for he was of Nazareth, and not of Zion.

CHAPTER XXIX.—XXX and XXXI.—The prophet cries woe to Ariel, the city where once David dwelt. Also he cries woe to those rebellious children of Jacob who sought a refuge in Egypt, where it was folly to trust ; besides he cursed the Egyptians once more.

CHAPTER XXXII.—Isaiah prophesies again the reign of a king who shall rule in righteousness.—The heading of this chapter in the translation, as the blessings of Christ's kingdom, is not appropriate, seeing that Isaiah calls that king a man, who shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. Jesus now is not considered a man, but a God in disguise, so that he can not be meant by the man referred to by Isaiah.

CHAPTER XXXIII and XXXIV.—Isaiah cries woe to the enemies of the Lord's people, and exclaims further that the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, destruction is upon them all ; they shall be slain, and stench shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood ; and the heaven, in those days, shall be rolled together like a curtain, so that all its host

shall fall down as falling figs off a tree. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood he says; it is made fat with fatness and with blood, etc.; and a great slaughter shall come over the land of Idumea, so that the land shall be soaked with blood.—Can it ever be possible that the description of such horrible enormities be held as inspired words, and that an all-wise God should ever condescend to allow his interpreters to talk such preposterous delirious language?

CHAPTER XXXV.—The prophet proceeds to describe the flourishing state of a kingdom in Zion (not Christ's, however, as the heading would have us believe), but one founded by the ransomed of the Lord, who should return from their bondage along a highway, where no unclean one (uncircumcised) should be allowed to pass.—Isaiah spoke of this returning from Assyria already in **chapt. XXVII : 13**, and we gave there our opinion thereof.

CHAPTER XXXVI till XL.—Contains the history of the invasion of Judah by Sennecherib, king of Assyria, but no prophecies. The commander of his army made a speech in public to the people of Jerusalem, asking them why they rebelled against the king of Assyria, why did they trust in the king of Egypt, whose support was not reliable, and why did they trust in the Lord their God, who never had been any aid to them. The language used on that occasion was far from respectful concerning the Lord, so that three courtiers of king Hezekiah, on hearing such words, rent their clothes, and reported the speech. The king upon that report, in great distress of mind, sent word to Isaiah, who soon relieved his mind from the fear for the Assyrians, promising him their total destruction. Accordingly it came to pass that the angel of the Lord went forth that same night and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and fourscore and five thousand (185000) men, and behold, when they arose early in the morning, they were all dead corpses.—This story is probably somewhat exaggerated, as it is not likely that as large an army was sent against so small a city as Jerusalem was (as to be seen from Jeremiah, last chapter, v. 28–30). This great miracle of slaughter was already mentioned in the Book of the Kings and of the Chronicles, where we spoke of it; also the account of Hezekiah's miraculous cure from boils performed by Isaiah, and all the rest of these chapters was mentioned before. The only remarkable new account to be found here is the predicting by Isaiah that all the treasures of the king's house should once be conveyed to Babylon. He predicted this after some messengers of the king of Babel had paid a visit to the king of Jerusalem, and had inspected his treasures. Seeing now that there were gold and silver articles, and that in those days the right of the strongest prevailed, so it required no great amount of prophetic capacity to understand that Babel should soon find pretext to rob the king's house.

CHAPTER XL.—Isaiah now comforts the people, stating that their iniquities are pardoned, for they have received double punishment for all their sins. "The

voice of him," says he, "that crieth in the wilderness; prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low," etc. (v. 3-4).—According to the Jewish translation, Isaiah says: "A voice calleth out: in the wilderness make ye clear the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert," etc. The Christian explainers of the scripture have deemed it useful to declare this a prophecy on John the Baptist, but taking into consideration that John the Baptist has neither made clear nor made straight any way of the Lord, so it cannot, by any means, be a prophecy on him. What the prophet said here was an allusion made to the highway, which the Lord would cause to be made in the desert, to conduct back from Assyria the captive Israelites. Of that highway, Isaiah spoke in chapt. XI: 16, and in chapt. XXXV: 8 and 10, and chapt. XLIII: 19.

CHAPTER XLI.—In the second verse Isaiah asks: "Who raised up the righteous from the east?" etc.—Many good Christians have declared that this righteous was their Christ, but when we are reading this chapter, we notice that a few lines further is spoken of the Lord's servant, therefore we judge it right to take it for granted that the righteous in question is the same as the servant. The servant now of the Lord is Israel. "Thou Israel art my servant," says the Lord, in verse 8. With "Israel" evidently the whole people of Israel is meant.

CHAPTER XLII.—Also in this chapter there is spoken of the Lord's servant. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street," etc. (v. 1-4).—Those words are expounded as being a prophecy on the meek Jesus Christ, but taking in consideration that instead of not crying and not lifting up his voice in the street, Jesus did the whole day nothing else, so we are sure that this prophecy does not relate to him, but will relate to the servant of the former chapter.

CHAPTER XLIII.—The Lord being yet on friendly terms with his people says: "Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name thou art mine (v. 1). . . For I am the Lord thy God, the holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee (v. 3). . . Ye are my witness, saith the Lord, and my servant, whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he (thy God); before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me (v. 10). I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me, there is no Saviour" (v. 11).—Now, if the writings or prophecies of Isaiah are to be believed, as the Christians pretend, then we may safely conclude that they bear no reference to a Christ, since besides the Lord of Israel there was no other Saviour.

CHAPTER XLIV.—We read : “ Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen ; thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which help thee ; fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou Jeshurun (Israel) whom I have chosen ” (v. 1-2) ; and further we read : “ Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts ; I am the first, and I am the last, and *besides me there is no God* (v. 6). Fear not, neither be afraid ; have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it ? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me ? yea, there is no God ; I know not any ” (v. 8).—In no more conclusive language than the foregoing could have been set forth that the Lord would suffer no God beside himself, and that he was One and indivisible. The very same prophecies of Isaiah are brought in evidence, however, for predicting the coming of Jesus, and he is stated on, that authority chiefly, to be as great as the Lord, a God himself, while they say precisely the total reverse, as we have fully shown.—The Lord further says : “ Remember these, O Jacob and Israel, for thou art my servant ; I have formed thee ; thou art my servant, etc. (v. 21). Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, he that formed thee from the womb. I am the Lord that maketh all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens *alone* ; that spreadeth abroad the earth *by myself* ” (v. 24).—Here is thus very plainly mentioned that Israel is the servant, the chosen one, and that the Lord is Israel's *only* Redeemer ; so that we know for the future that whenever there is spoken in the book of the prophets of the Redeemer, or of the chosen servant, we have no right to construe either as relating to Jesus of Nazareth. The faithful Christians are apt to make that mistake, but it is plain they have no right to do so.

CHAPTER XLV.—The Lord speaks unto Cyrus in behalf of his people. Cyrus is now his anointed, whose right hand is holden to subdue nations before him.—As Cyrus was the king of Persia, we perceive by Isaiah's admission that the Lord could also look with favor on heathens. This is remarkable ! It is, besides, somewhat remarkable that Isaiah should speak at all of a king who lived some 200 years later. Reading the book of Ezra, we perceived how Cyrus was brought to the idea of releasing the Jews of their bondage ; and observing moreover, that the language and the style of those last chapters is superior to that of the preceding ones ; there being not the extravagance in illustration, nor the monstrous nonsense to be found in it ; would it therefore not be possible that a few chapters of a later date were accidentally mixed with those of Isaiah by some later holy man, for the sake of the holy people ; for as was the case with the Second Book of Samuel, it might have been written after his death. In Ezra, verses 2 and 3, it is stated that Cyrus was so much pleased in finding his name put down as deliverer of the Jews, that their release was ordered at once ; if, therefore, these chapters should have found accidentally a place among Isaiah's writings it would be at least as valuable as the rest, on account of the happy result they produced.

CHAPTER XLVI.—In this chapter (v. 9) the Lord says : Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else ; I am God, and there is none like me.—Can it still be possible, after those repeated assertions, to pretend that this same God should have a Son, his equal in every respect ! Would it not be better for the Christians to exclude all such chapters from their bible ?

CHAPTERS XLVII.—XLVIII.—The destruction of Babylon is again prophesied.—Seeing that no time when that should take place was fixed, and seeing that every city will once decay and successively disappear, it was not difficult to foretell such. About that so-called prophecy we spoke already in chapt. XIII.

CHAPTER XLIX.—The Lord, speaking to Israel, said : “ It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the surviving of Israel ; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth ” (v. 6).—The Christian sees here a prophecy of Jesus, but if he would give himself the trouble of comparing it with verse 3, he would soon notice that the Lord speaks of Israel.

CHAPTER L.—Entitled in the old translation, “ Christ sheweth his ability to save.” This heading was of course not written by Isaiah, who did know but one God and Saviour. It commences in this way : “ Thus saith the Lord ; where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement ? ” etc. . . . Whereupon the mother is made to answer : “ I gave my back to smiters, my cheek to them that plucked off hair ; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”—This now is pretended to refer to Jesus, who never gave his back to smiters, but had to submit to being pinioned. The mother referred to is no other than the city of Jerusalem, and this is fully to be seen in the last part of the next chapter, (v. 17, etc.) where is said, while treating on the same subject : “ Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord of his fury ; ” and again, “ there is none to guide her among the sons whom she hath brought forth,” etc. The mother, therefore, is Jerusalem ; also it would be strange that this should represent a prophecy of harsh treatment which Jesus would have to undergo, without the slightest mention being made of what further would happen to him.

CHAPTER LI.—This chapter is headed in the old translation : “ An exhortation to trust in Christ,” without it containing the slightest reference to that effect, and without Isaiah’s authority, who never alluded even in the remotest degree to any other Saviour but the Lord, the God of Israel.—The prophet promises here a most happy life to the chosen people when returned to Zion.

CHAPTER LII.—The Lord says now to Jerusalem that she may put on her beautiful garments, for henceforth no uncircumcised shall come into her. The Lord himself will bring back into her his oppressed people, and will be their king ; and he that brings the good tidings, saying : “ Thy God reigneth,” has been

tiful feet upon the mountains.—Because Jesus went sometimes up the mountains, the Christian sees herein a prophecy, though the prophet meant with the beautiful feet, very likely, nothing else than that the mentioned tiding would be well received.—Further the Lord said, speaking of Israel : Behold my servant shall deal prudently ; he shall be excelled and extolled and be very high. As many were astonished at thee ; his visage was so marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men (v. 14).—Now, if this had reference to Jesus, as the Christians presume, nobody, no doubt, of his ignorant contemporaries would ever have believed him to be the Son of God. The meaning of the prophet is, that Israel was despised by the other nations, as a leper with a marred face among men. But Israel should recover, and be placed high.—That other nations and kings, when seeing such, should be greatly astonished, is the meaning of the next verse ; which reads according to the Jewish translation : “ *Thus he will cause many nations to jump (in astonishment)* ” etc. While the Christian translators say : “ *so shall he sprinkle many nations,* ” etc. (v. 15).

CHAPTER LIII.—The prophets asks to those other nations : “ Who hath believed our report ? ” (that is, the report of the former chapter). The other nations then answer, apologizingly, (we shall take the words of the Jewish version) : “ *He grew up like a small shoot before him, and as a root out of a dry land : he had no form nor comeliness, so that we should look at him ; and no countenance, so that we should desire him. He was despised and shunned by man, a man of pains and acquainted with disease ; and as one who hid his face from us, was he despised, and we esteemed him not* (v. 1, 2).—The prophet still represents here the nations as men, and Israel as a diseased man, or leper ; the Christians have nevertheless deemed it proper to declare this a prophecy of their Lord Jesus, as if an individual of whom it is written that he was constantly surrounded by large multitudes, and even whose followers were so numerous that the authorities of Jerusalem, in apprehension of disturbances, deemed it unadvisable to arrest him openly, could be said to have been shunned by men, or to have been as one who hid his face. Besides, Jesus was not a man of disease, for his whole way of life proves that he was possessed of a healthy constitution.—We read further, (in the Jewish translation) : “ *But only our diseases did he bear himself, and our pains he carried ; while we indeed esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Yet he was wounded for our transgressions ; he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and through his bruises was healing granted to us* (v. 4, 5).—The prophet submits this as an acknowledgment of the other nations, that the people of Israel, owing to the idolatry that originally belonged to those other nations, was made a martyr, and that through the punishments visited upon them, they (the other nations) were made acquainted with the Lord, and healed from their idolatry. It would not be correct to imagine that this should be a prophecy of the sufferings of Jesus, and on that basis to declare his crucifixion to be in atonement of the sins of other men ; such supposition being directly opposed to all belief in Divine justice.

The idea that Israel for adopting idolatry from other nations was punished, and that those same nations did profit by the example, this is a representation not so hurting to the general sense of Divine justice; since it does not imply that every individual of the nation of Israel should therefore bear the punishment of the sin of others, but each should bear a little, while he was not entirely innocent. And, as we suppose that the author of this chapter will have had some, it may be yet so little, conception of Divine justice, we are inclined to believe that he meant it in the way that we have explained. Besides, if these words were intended for Jesus, then the prophet could not have said: "our transgressions and our iniquities," for according to the Christian creed, Jesus bore the chastisement of the transgressions and the iniquities of his believing community, but not of the Jews, since they are damned to hell, so that the prophet never could have said that he bore the punishment in favor of his nation.—The other nations continue acknowledging their sins and praising Israel: *We all like sheep went astray; every one to his own way (idolatry) did we turn, and the Lord let befall him the guilt of us all* (v. 6). *He was oppressed and he was also taunted, yet he opened not his mouth, like the lamb which is led to the slaughter, and like a ewe before his shearers, is dumb; so he opened not his mouth* (v. 7).—These are the words of the Jewish version; in the Christian version they have put: *he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter*, etc., so that everybody might understand that it referred to Jesus, that meek lamb of God, as they call him; but according to the Jewish version, there is only said that the person in question was dumb as a lamb led to the slaughter, and there is not said that he was slaughtered, which makes a marked difference. The prophet means to say here that though Israel was oppressed, he did not complain.—The next verse (v. 8) is also different in the Christian from the Jewish bible; in the Christian there is said that the person in question was cut off out of the land of the living, while in the Jewish bible we find only an inquiring remark concerning it, to wit: "*Who could tell that he was cut away out of the land of life, that for the transgressions of my people the plague was laid on him?*"—It is now the Lord who is supposed to speak, and who will give to understand that though Israel has been taken away as a criminal (by the Assyrians), his generation is still existing, so that one cannot tell that he is cut away out of the land of life.—The Lord continues: "*And he made his grave with the wicked, and (was) with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth* (v. 9).—The Christians of course see here a prophecy on their Christ, because he has been buried in the garden of a rich man, and because there was, they say, no deceit in his mouth! But the good Christians would do well if they would notice that the grave of the person in question should be with the wicked, while Jesus' tomb was in the garden of a most pious man. Then, the person in question should be with the rich in his death, while Jesus during his death went to Paradise (vide St. Luke, XXIII: 43); and in the Paradise there were only poor folks (St. Matt. XIX: 24), thus it was not Jesus Isaiah spoke of. Moreover, he said of that person. "*there was no deceit in his mouth*," and this cannot be said of the Christian

Lord Jesus ; for does Jesus not assert several times that he should come down from heaven sitting on a cloud, to judge the earth, while the generation of his time should still be alive, even some of his disciples should still be living (vide St. Matt. XX V : 26 ; St. Matt. XXVI : 64 ; St. Mark, IX : 1). Nevertheless, we see that the whole generation and all the disciples died, but Jesus never came. He asserted likewise that his coming down should take place at the same time with the destruction of Jerusalem (vide St. Matt. XXIV ; St. Mark, XIII ; and St. Luke, XXI). Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans about 70 years after the death of Jesus, but Jesus did not come at the time appointed ; consequently, there was deceit in his mouth.—What the author of this prophecy meant to say was, that Israel, being dead as a nation, was buried among the wicked (the idolaters), but at the same time God had allowed the people to be with the rich (they were slaves to the rich Chaldeans), so that they had not to suffer from want ; “ because there was no deceit in his (Israel’s) mouth ; ” that will say, because no false doctrines were preached by Israel.—The following two verses, according to the Jewish text, are thus : “ *But the Lord was pleased to crush him through disease ; when (now) his soul hath brought the trespass-offering, then shall he see (his) seed live many days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. (Freed) from the trouble of his soul shall he see (the good) and be satisfied : through his knowledge shall my righteous servant bring the many to righteousness, while he will bear their iniquities* (v. 10–11).—In the Christian translation there are some slight differences, very apt to induce the unsuspecting reader more easily to understand that this chapter refers to the sufferings of Jesus for the sins of man, as the translators have boldly invested the heading of the chapter. The Lord speaks here, however, of the righteous servant, and this was Israel, as we saw in chapt. XLIX : 3. He says of him that after he has brought his trespass-offering he shall see his generation live many days. The Israelite law (vide Levit. XIV), prescribed that a leper being healed should bring a trespass-offering ; the prophet having compared Israel to a leper, will merely say, after Israel is healed again, he shall be a prosperous nation. And further the prophet says, that through his knowledge (in the true religion) shall Israel bring the many (the other nations) to righteousness (to abhorrence of idolatry), though he bore their iniquities.—“ *Therefore,*” said the Lord, proceeding to speak, “ *will I divide him (a portion) with the many, and with the strong shall he divide the spoil ; because he poured his soul unto death, and with transgressors was he numbered : while he bore the sins of many, and for the transgressors he let (evil) befall him* (v. 12, according to the Jewish text).—The meaning of this text is : the Lord promised Israel that he will give him a portion (a country of his own) as other nations have, and then Israel shall be as mighty as the strongest, in reward of his suffering with resignation. “ *His pouring his soul unto death*” signifies that Israel was, as a nation, nearly dead ; and “ *with transgressors was he numbered,*” signifies that other nations supposed Israel to be a transgressing nation, while they deemed themselves much better. The last line of this verse, “ *and for the transgressors he let (evil) befall him,*” is quite different from the

Christian text, where we find "*and he made intercession for the transgressors.*"—Of course the Christians see also in this verse a prophecy on their meek Lord Jesus, entirely forgetting that they represent Jesus to be as mighty as God the father, so that this one did not need give him a portion with the many, nor could he give him spoil to divide, since all what existed belonged to him. The rest of this verse sounds nevertheless somewhat like a prophecy on the sacrificed Jesus, especially when we would take it for granted that the Christian bible translation was more correct than the Jewish text, and when we would take it for granted that the soul of Jesus was poured into death, and that by this he made intercession for transgressors. Seeing however that we have no evidence of that intercession, and that it militates entirely against all ideas of Divine justice, we cannot yet take this for granted. If however the Christian bible translators had been willing to add to the prophecy that the here mentioned righteous servant died on a cross, and that he got up alive the third day and then went up to heaven sitting on a cloud, then perhaps we might have been convinced that the prophecy referred to Jesus; but as it is now, we are thoroughly convinced that it does not.

The prophet or scribe who wrote these pages had apparently nothing in view but to give king Cyrus a high opinion of the favour in which the descendants of Jacob called Israel, stood with the Lord. He wrote it as we may believe without intention to do much mischief with it. Later generations did not comprehend the meaning of this chapter; there was spoken of a man that suffered chastisement for the sin of others, this was contrary to all ideas of justice, and what it would say, they did not know. Some five centuries after the Jewish return from captivity, Jesus the fisherman of the lake of Galilee, set himself up as prophet, soon thereafter declaring that he was the great king David II., the saviour of Israel, of whom many prophets had spoken. He went to Jerusalem, but instead of being appointed king in that city, the authorities of the place deemed it right to crucify such a seditious leader of the mob, that being the usual punishment in those cases. The followers of that prophet were then much annoyed at seeing their chief, instead of becoming the mighty king, dying so dishonorably; but see, they found a way to help themselves out of the scrape, they declared that the mighty king would come back from heaven and then would he fulfill all what he had said, while this punishment of death was voluntarily endured by him in order to make an atonement for the sin of his people, for this was prophesied by the prophet Isaiah. And thus became this so-called prophecy, written with an entirely different intention, the origin of the crazy and blaspheming doctrine that God should have taken in atonement, for the sin of the wicked, the blood of an innocent.

CHAPTER LV.—The Lord advises this time the barren to sing, for says he, the children of the desolate are more than the children of the married wife. It appears from a few lines further that the barren was the city of Jerusalem; the Lord was her husband; he forsook her for a short time, but he would come back

to the wife of his youth with great mercy, this saith the Lord her Redeemer. The Lord will lay her stones with fair colours, and her foundations with sapphires. And her windows he will make of agates, and her gates of carbuncles, and all her borders of pleasant stones. And all her children (the Lord seemed to forget that she was barren) shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of her children.—These promises to Jerusalem are doubtless handsome; a pity however that they never were fulfilled, for though Jerusalem was built up again after the Babylonian captivity, she still was not built up of sapphires, neither of agates, nor carbuncles, but of common bricks and stones; and the peace which the children of Jerusalem enjoyed since that prophecy, was never very great, nor at all enviable. For did not we see that, in the time of Isaiah, Jerusalem became tributary to the kings of Assyria, and when one and a half century later, Jerusalem endeavoured to get rid of the payment of her tributes to Babylon, the king Nebuchadnezzar of that city sent up an army, which took Jerusalem and burnt her down, carrying off her inhabitants as slaves. Cyrus, king of Persia, became 50 years after that event also king of Babylon, and gave leave to the Jews to return and to rebuild their city; the Jews went, but were, during long years, disturbed in their work by the surrounding inhabitants. Jerusalem at last rebuilt, remained nevertheless subjected to the kings of Persia. In the year 334 B. C., Alexander the great, king of Macedonia, went up against Persia, and took on his way possession of Jerusalem. After the death of that monarch, Jerusalem was conquered by Ptolemy, king of Egypt. For more than a century she remained under the rule of Egypt, and was during that time always the point of strife between the Egyptians and Syrians, which latter tried to get possession of her. Antiochus king of Syria, succeeded at last (in the year 203, B. C.) to conquer her, so that she became a Syrian city. Jerusalem henceforth rebelled repeatedly against the kings of Syria, but even notwithstanding the heroic efforts of the Maccabees, she was not able to free herself of the Syrian government, and remained under it, until, in the year 63, B. C., all Syria (whereto Judah also belonged) was subjected to the Roman sway. The now repeated revolts of the Jews against the Romans brought upon them the heavy hand of Rome, so that an army sent against them, burnt the city of Jerusalem down and killed and dispersed her inhabitants. This holy city was after a lapse of time rebuilt again, but again she knew no peace, as the history of the Crusades will show. After having thus continually been the battleground of bloody wars and discord, and after having almost always been under foreign rule, Jerusalem has yet at last, not become the abode of her children, but the abode of the children of Mahomet.—One may notice from this how much the beautiful promises of the prophecies of Isaiah are worth!

CHAPTER LV.—In this chapter the prophet invites the people to seek the Lord, then the Lord shall bless them, even make an everlasting covenant with them, to warrant the bounties they shall enjoy through their promised king David, whom the Lord shall give as a witness to the people, and as a leader and com

mander to the people (v. 3-4).—Because there is spoken here of the sure mercies of David, and that the Christian find the name of David and the name of Jesus very similar, they see here a prophecy on him. Isaya speaks however of no one else but of the great king promised in the preceding chapters, the hero of Israel, the David the second to come ; that he did not speak of Jesus appears by his saying that the Lord will give him as a leader and commander to the people (of Israel). Jesus now was never a commander of that people, and thus it cannot have anything to do with him.

CHAPTER LVI—LXVI.—Seeing that the rest of the prophecies of Isaiah are of less importance for us, as they do not contain many prophecies on David the second, and are but repetitions of what is already said, we deem it useless to proceed with the discussion of those chapters, leaving it to the reader to examine them for himself.

The whole book of the prophecies attributed to Isaiah, are intended without doubt to be very impressive on account of its high seasoned style, and grand promises and terrible woe-cryings. That it nevertheless should have been the work of only one prophet, must be doubted for various reasons. The style for instance from Chapt. XXXVI to about Chapt. LIIV. is much more regular, and they are evidently written by a far superior author than the other parts, which are mostly so confused and replete of such extravagant representations and illustrations, that they bear the evidence of having been composed by one who had sometimes moments of delirium. Then, it is known that the books of the old Testament were collected in their present form after the captivity in Babylon, so that it would not have been difficult before that time to add a few chapters to some of the books. In Chapt. XLIX. and XLX. the Persian king Cyrus is called by his true name, and requested by the Lord to grant the children of Jacob their liberty ; there is no instance to be found anywhere else in the whole bible that a true name is prophesied, and as Isaiah lived some two hundred years before Cyrus, it looks rather suspicious, and one would be willing to suppose that some later prophet had here been at work, in order to show the books to Cyrus ; which also was done as we see in Ezra I. And as proof that some chapters actually were written during the captivity may serve that in Chapt. LXIV, is said : *Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire ; and all our pleasant things are laid waste* (v. 11). This was not the case in Isaiah's time, so that he had no need then to complain in that way, but it was the case in the time of the Babylonian captivity, and it was thus a man of that time who wrote this down.—Except thus the mentioning of the name of Cyrus, there is, as we showed, in the whole book called prophecies of Isaiah, not a single word of real truth foretold. The name of prophecies it does consequently not deserve ; but let us keep the name and understand, that because the human kind is not gifted with the power of foreseeing the future, prophecy means nothing else but a collection of most extravagant nonsense, compiled by fools to impose upon other fools.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

This prophet flourished in the time of the war of the people of Judah with the Babylonians, which war ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the carrying away in captivity of Judah's people. From what he witnessed, he could of course write down many melancholy accounts, as it afforded plenty of such instances.

The prophet commences by stating that he once was informed by the Lord in this wise : Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Jeremiah somewhat modest, answered : Ah Lord God, behold I cannot speak ; for I am a child. This difficulty, however, was soon removed, for the Lord put forth his hand and touched his mouth, saying : behold I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant (v. 9-10).—We may accordingly conclude that Jeremiah was the highest among the prophets, as far as credentials are concerned.—And not only were the words of the Lord put into his mouth, but moreover, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying : Jeremiah what seest thou ? And Jeremiah said : I see a sprig of an almond tree. Then said the Lord unto him : Thou hast well seen ; for I will hasten my word to perform it (v. 11-12).—Jeremiah was thus found fit to assume his duties, we should almost say, of Governor General of Creation according to his statement.—What seest thou ? said the Lord an other time, Jeremiah then answered : I see a seething pot and the face thereof is toward the North. This incident happened to be a sure sign that evil was to break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land ; Jeremiah was thereupon made, a defenced city, an iron pillar, and brazen walls (v. 18) ; thus prepared he went to work.

Jeremiah after complaining of Israel's sin in forsaking the Lord (Chapt. II), compares her in Chapt. III. to a harlot and her treacherous sister Judah also. In the next (chapter IV.) the Lord exacts of Israel that she shall swear, that the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness ; and that the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory (v. 2)—as if Israel could swear what would be done by other nations.—Jeremiah was thereupon commissioned in (Chapter V) to run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem ; to see and know if he could find a man, if there be any that did justice, so that the Lord might pardon the city. The Lord wanted however to avenge himself, for there was no virtuous man to be found, and moreover, a wonderful and horrible thing was committed in the land ; the prophets prophesied falsely and the priests bore rule by their means (v. 30).—Jerusalem so benevolently blessed in chapter III : 17, is now to be cursed in Chapter VI.—This shows the value

of prophecies, for whatever the result might be of the next inroad into Jewish territory, a prophecy could be referred to, as having foreshadowed what would happen; this was very convenient; the prophets always took good care to give no dates, so there could be no difficulty on that score.—Jeremiah wishes, that his head were waters and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people (Chapt. IX).—This is very charitable and it shows also, what an incorrigible set these holy people must have been.—Jerusalem was cursed and destruction promised over and over again (from Chapt. VI. to Chapt. XI.); it should become a den of dragons,—but as that city was subsequently rebuilt, there is no proof that the prophecy was fulfilled.—Neither was it necessary for Jeremiah to proclaim in Chapt. XI God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and later with Moses, that they should possess a land of milk and honey, as that agreement had already been so repeatedly violated, that it was too much out of time to repeat it.—Jeremiah in Chapt. XII thus addresses his master: "Righteous art thou O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments"; and thereupon he begins to rebuke the Lord's actions in the most impertinent manner.—In Chapter XV. the crisis seems to be approaching, for we find that though Moses and Samuel were to plead in their favor, the doom of the Jews was sealed; all the promises and pledges made to them in the name of the Lord notwithstanding.—In Chapt. XVI. we are informed that the Lord prohibited Jeremiah to marry in the land of Judah, seeing that all the children born in that country should die of grievous deaths and not be buried, but be as dung on the face of the earth. And in the next chapter (XVII) we are informed that the Lord's anger was kindled in this manner, because king Manasse (who was dead already some 200 years) had sinned.—Further to prove how entirely the people of Judah were in the Lord's hands, the Lord (in Chapt. XVIII.) sent Jeremiah to a potter to see how he wrought clay and broke the pot when he made it wrong, this was by way of illustration.—The Lord forgot however that he being a God, and not a fallible man, must not make mistakes, and had therefore no right to act as the potter.—

Again in Chapter XIX. Jeremiah had to take a potter's earthen bottle, and take the ancients of the people and the ancients of the priests to a place designated, and proclaim the destruction of Jerusalem, by breaking the bottle. This time Jerusalem's destruction should take place, because the Jews had burned their children with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal (v. 5).—This of course would be a good reason to destroy such city, but as it is well known, that one of the characteristics of the Jews is that they are devotedly fond of their offspring, they never can have been guilty of such revolting atrocity. We believe therefore that Jeremiah sought pretexts. Also the only instance of exception known, was Jephthah the chosen Warrior of the Lord, not to mention the Lord himself, of whom it is said that he sacrificed his only son!—Chapter XX—Pashur a priest of rank smote Jeremiah for his prophecies, which so displeased that prophet, that in a fit of rage he describes how he was mocked by the people and his sayings disregarded; and cursing the day he was born, even cursing the man who brought his

father the tidings of his birth, he invokes from the Lord vengeance on the whole nation for his (Jeremiah's) sake.—So much for his piety!—Jeremiah, in his XXIst chapter, informs king Zedekiah's messengers, who came to consult him in regard to an approaching invasion by Nebuchadnezzar, that the people of Jerusalem will be smitten by the Lord, who will fight against them with outstretched hand, and that they shall die of pestilence; and what then remains of the population shall be carried off in slavery by the conqueror.—If Jeremiah had been in the pay of the enemy, he could not have disheartened his countrymen more effectually.—In chapter XXII Jeremiah pays a visit to the king of Judah, and exhorting him to repentance, says that if he hear unto his words, there will come a time when kings shall sit on his throne, driving in chariots and riding on horseback. Further, he cursed some of the statesmen, as Shallum and Coniah.

CHAPTER XXIII.—This chapter contains the promise of a restoration. "And I will," says the Lord, "gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again, to their folds."—This evidently bears upon a reunion of the people of Israel, which, however, never took place.—"And behold, the days come," said the Lord, "that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice on the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called: The Lord our righteousness" (v. 5-6).—Probably this must be understood: "the Lord is our righteousness." The Christians see in those verses a very plain prophecy of Jesus, who told that he should come back from the skies and then reign as king in Jerusalem. But taking in consideration that until now he has not yet reigned as king upon the throne of David, neither has he delivered Israel nor Judah, nor has afforded them to dwell safely, so we cannot take it as a prophecy of him as long as he had not done those things. The prophet Jeremiah promises here, in imitation of Isaiah, a great hero, a king David the second. That great king, however, never came.—No wonder, however, that the words of the prophet were not fulfilled, for Jeremiah himself declares, in v. 14-17 of this chapter, that prophets walk in lies.

CHAPTER XXIV.—The Lord in his instructions to Jeremiah made, this time, very ingeniously use of two baskets of figs for illustration.

CHAPTER XXV.—Another prophecy of invasion by the king of Babylon and of utter desolation, and perpetual ruin of Judah, follows; but seventy years afterwards the king of Babylon is to be punished, and his land is to become a perpetual desolation.—Everybody knows that neither a perpetual ruin of Judah, nor a perpetual desolation of Babylon seventy years later, took place: so that

we do not want to show how much the prophet was in the wrong.

CHAPTER XXVI.—Here we are informed that the people of Jerusalem would kill Jeremiah on account of his evil prophecies, but fortunately for him he was protected and saved by one of the elders named Abikam.

CHAPTER XXVII.—Jeremiah, upon special order of the Lord, made himself yokes of wood, and hung them around his neck. With that attire he walked through the city, prophesying that every one who was not willing to put his neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon would be punished by the Lord with pestilence and famine. And every prophet who would not speak the same as Jeremiah, he denounced to be a liar, and not sent by the Lord, wherefore he advised the people not to listen to them.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—We read that once upon a day Jeremiah came across the prophet Hananiah, who forthwith prophesied that the yoke of Babylon would be broken in the same manner as that of Jeremiah, and suiting the action to the words, he dashed Jeremiah's yoke to pieces. Jeremiah went away and put on immediately a yoke of iron, now prophesying that the Lord would henceforth punish the people with a yoke of iron instead of a wooden one.—As if the people could help that Hananiah crushed the wooden one.

CHAPTER XXIX.—Again Jeremiah denounces all his colleagues as false prophets, especially Shemaiah was now a bad one, and therefore he was doomed, with his whole generation to come. But Jeremiah himself was the only true prophet, because he prophesied it would be only seventy years before the Jews should be blessed with the happy future the Lord once promised, and all of them who were in captivity should return.—We do not deem it necessary to observe that Jeremiah spoke here no more truth than any of the other prophets, whereas the Jews have even until now never experienced anything of all the promised blessings; nor has the time of duration of their captivity been seventy years, for it has only been fifty years. According to the Hebrew calculation, the Babylonian captivity began in the year 3402, while in 3452 Cyrus restored them again to liberty, which gives but fifty years of captivity.

CHAPTER XXX.—The Lord promised once more to cause Israel and Judah to return to the land of their fathers.—Unfortunately, however, Israel has never returned, as it was Judah alone that has returned.—After this promise was given, the Lord inquired of Jeremiah if he knew whether a man doth travail with child? for he saw every man (in Jerusalem) with his hand on his loins, as a woman in travail, and their faces turned into paleness (v. 6). Jeremiah does not report us his answer on that extraordinary question, but continues with prophesying that the trouble of Jacob shall be great; the Lord, however, shall save him out of it. And in that day the Lord shall break his yoke, and strangers

shall rule no more, but the people of Jacob shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom the Lord will raise up unto them.—Because there is spoken of a king David, many Christians think to see here a prophecy on Jesus; taking, however, in consideration that Jesus never sat on the throne of David, nor that his name was David, so it is plain enough that Jeremiah alludes to nobody else than to the mighty hero and king, David the second, whom the people still expected on account of Isaiah's prophecies.

CHAPTER XXXI.—“At that time,” said the Lord, “will I be the God to all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.—The Lord evidently did not know that ten of the twelve families of Israel should entirely die out, so that it would be difficult to make them all twelve his people.—The Lord then continues to speak of his love, his everlasting love for Israel, who he has drawn with loving kindness (v. 3). He (the Lord) is a father to Israel, and Ephraim is his first-born (v. 9). Ephraim is his dear son; he is his pleasant child, and the Lord will surely have mercy upon him, this saith Lord (v. 20).—Unfortunately that the pleasant child Ephraim, instead of enjoying surely the Lord's mercy, has died with all his other brethren in Assyria. Surely this is a pity! Besides, it is a pity that the name of Ephraim is here so plainly written down, else the sayings of “dear son,” and “pleasant child,” would have been desirable prophecies on the dear child Jesus.

CHAPTER XXXII.—Jeremiah was put in prison by king Zedekiah, who did not admire his prophecies. While in prison the prophet bought a field of his uncle, and gives us a copious account concerning this trade.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—The Lord promises now again that after the land has been destroyed by the Chaldeans, it again shall be restored, and all the good things he once promised unto the house of Israel, and unto the house of Judah, shall he fulfill. And in those days shall he cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment, and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called: “The Lord our righteousness” (v. 14-16).—The Christians, of course, declare those verses to be prophecies concerning their Christ. That Jesus never executed judgment in the land nor that Judah was ever saved, or Jerusalem ever dwelt safely through him, this the easy believers do not notice. They would, however, act wiser by observing that Jeremiah alludes to nothing else than to the reign of peace that should characterize the dominion of the great king to come, prophesied by Isaiah. That he imitates Isaiah, can be seen from his using the same expression, of “branch” (vide Isaiah IV). The great king to come should be, as we here notice, a descendant of David, but Jesus was a descendant of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XXIV till LII.—Jeremiah having already once been put in prison on account of his prophecies being considered as discouraging the people in their present war, continue), nevertheless, to prophecy famine, pestilence, and destruction, if they did not surrender. Soon we see him put in prison for a second time, he, namely, got once the idea to try to get out of the city (the city was besieged), and thus the watch on the gate caught him on suspicion of conspiring with the enemy, and locked him up. Being afterwards brought before the king, he supplicated so meekly that the king took compassion, and allowed him a larger prison and a fresh baked loaf every day. Jeremiah went on, however, making prophecies, so that the princes said unto the king: "We beseech thee, let this man be put to death, for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in the city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them; for this man seeketh not the welfare of the people, but their ruin" (Chapt. XXXVHI : 4). The king gave him in their hands, whereupon Jeremiah was taken and cast into a dungeon, where he sunk in the mire. On further consideration his release was allowed by the king; Jeremiah again made another prophecy as dismal as any of his former productions. Jerusalem was now taken by the enemy, misery and suffering was everywhere, except for Jeremiah, who appears on excellent terms with the conquerors, as victuals and a reward is given to him by the captain of the guard (Chapt. XL : 5)—That reward he must have earned. Would this not go far to show that the accusation of the nobles, that he weakened the hands of the soldiers, and that he did not seek the welfare of the people, were true to the letter, and that Jeremiah, the prophet of the Lord of hosts, was nothing else but a traitor to his own land, bribed by the enemy? Also, we discover in Chapter XLIII, that he is accused, by the remnant of the Jews, of treachery and of speaking falsely, in order to deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans.—Jeremiah is further carried into Egypt by Jew emigrants, where, as usual, he promises all sorts of evil to the land that is unfortunate enough to hold him. He further successively predicts evil to Gaza, to the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites; the latter will be utterly destroyed, like Sodom and Gomorrah;—their country is the Arabia of the present time (not yet destroyed). No more true was his prophecy against Babylon.—Jeremiah's now conceived dislike for Babylon can perhaps be explained from Chapter LI : 34, stating how Nebuchadnezzar had treated him : "The king hath devoured me, he hath crushed me; he hath made me an empty vessel; he hath swallowed me up like a dragon; he hath filled his belly with my delicacies; he hath cast me out."—Jeremiah evidently means to convey the idea that he had met with ingratitude at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, who has not rewarded sufficiently all his delicacies.—The last chapter, LII, relates to the total breaking up of Jerusalem; the number of Jews carried off in captivity is given (in v. 30) as 4600 in all—Even allowing for runaways, it would appear from Jeremiah's statement that Jerusalem was not so important a place as is generally supposed.

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

If the prophecies of Jeremiah are dismal, his lamentations are possibly even more so ; the only statement they contain of historical value, if he is to be believed, is, that the Jews were sold in Babylon for money, which would prove that they were actually slaves, and had slave labor to perform.—Jeremiah's writings do not profess much respect for the Lord, whose name is apparently used by him merely as a bugbear to frighten the masses ; especially in those lamentations he speaks rather disrespectful of the Lord, only in the last chapter he addresses him very meekly, even so meek that this last chapter bears not the genuineness of Jeremiah's style.

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

Ezekiel, the priest, was among the captives by the river of Chebar (Chapter I.) And it came to pass on the fifth day, of the fourth month, of the thirtieth year, that the heavens were opened for him and he saw visions of God. He then saw, a whirlwind, a cloud, a fire unfolding itself, in the midst thereof the colour of amber, and in the midst of that the likeness of four living creatures, looking like men ; every one having four faces and four wings ; their feet being straight and the sole of their feet being like the sole of a calf's foot, sparkling like burnished brass. And as for likeness, they had the face of a man, the face of a man on the right side and the face of an ox on the left side ; they also had the face of an eagle ; their appearance was like burning coals of fire and like lamps ; it went up and down among the living creatures, and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning, and thunder, and so forth. This altogether was the appearance of the Glory of the Lord. Ezekiel having contemplated all this, fell on his face.—The Lord then said to him (Chapt. II.) "Son of man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee."—After this (in Chapt. III.) the Lord caused him to eat a roll, containing prophecies, for the people of Israel only. And the spirit took Ezekiel up and brought him among the captives of Tel-abid. Walking from there, he saw again the Glory of the Lord, and the spirit ordered him to shut himself up in his house, as the people were to put bands upon him and bind him.—The people of Tel-abid will perhaps have taken him for a lunatic and no wonder if they did, for in Chapter IV, we see Ezekiel, upon special order of the Lord, take a tile and lay it before him and portray upon it the city of Jerusalem ; and he laid siege against the tile, building a fort against it with a

iron pan, and he set the camp against it, placing battering rams round about. Having done this he had to lie on his left side 390 days and then again 40 days on his right side, also he had to make bread of beans, wheat, barley, etc., and bake it with dung that cometh out of man, and eat it in their sight (v. 12).—What sublime commandments of the Lord!—Ezekiel however objected to that diet, whereupon the Lord had the kindness to allow that cow's dung might be substituted for man's dung.—Ezekiel having eaten his cakes, was to shave off all his hair, (Chapt. V,) a third part of it he should burn on the tile, another third part smite about it, and the remaining third part scatter in the wind. A few of the hairs he should bind to his skirts. This tended to illustrate the judgment of the Lord upon Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VI. and VII.—Ezekiel should further prophesy against the mountains and the land of Israel, threatening them with the sword of the Lord, and with all kind of terrible punishments, as a retaliation for all their abominations.—CHAPTER VIII.—And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, as Ezekiel sat in his house, that suddenly a vision came upon him.—And, behold; a likeness as the appearance of fire he saw; the appearance was from his loins even downward like fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. And that appearance put forth his hand and took Ezekiel by a lock of his hair, and lifting him up brought him to Jerusalem to the door of the temple. There he saw the Glory of the God of Israel; who to prove that he had good reason to be jealous, showed him all the idols and abominable things they had portrayed on the walls round about.—The Lord thereupon ordained (in Chapt. IX.) that the men who had charge over the city should draw near, every one with his destroying weapon. Those men came and waited beside the brazen altar. The God of Israel now alighted from the Churn, whereupon he was sitting, and went to the threshold of the house. Here he gave his orders to these men to go through the city and to slay, utterly, old and young, both maids and little children and women.—Ezekiel saw yet more such visions (Chapt. X and XI.), visions of coals of fire scattered over the city, and visions of Cherubims, and visions of Glories of the Lord, etc.—In Chapt. XII, we see Ezekiel packing up his things, and breaking a hole in the wall of his house, escaping through it, as a sign for the house of Israel, that their king should flee out of Jerusalem.—Though this sign may be somewhat queer, still the lover of prophecies will admire Ezekiel's faculty of knowing beforehand that the king Zedekiah should flee out of Jerusalem. We therefore advise such one to remember that Ezekiel's prophecies were written after that fact had taken place. (As proof may serve that in Chapt. XIV, he speaks of Daniel, who flourished some time after Jerusalem was taken).—In Chapt. XIII, the prophet got order to prophesy against all the other prophets of Israel,—and again in Chapt. XIV, the prophet threatens some other men that came to ask him counsel. He said their land shall be destroyed by wild beasts, and even if Noah, Daniel or Job were coming to deliver them, they would not succeed.—Chapt. XV. Because

the wood of the vine burnt just as well as other wood, therefore the Lord said he would devour the inhabitants of Jerusalem with fire; should they succeed in escaping from one fire, another should devour them, that they might understand that he was the Lord.

CHAPTER XVI.—XXV.—And the words of the Lord came again unto Ezekiel, saying: "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations etc." The Lord, then, in imitation of Jeremiah, hit upon the ingenious idea of clothing his thoughts in the shape of a novel; Jerusalem is represented as his sweetheart, forsaken by him because she grossly prostituted herself.—In chapter XVII Ezekiel is commanded to put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel. This riddle, or rather parable, speaks of eagles and a twig of cedar which became a vine of low stature and so on.—The riddle refers probably to the kings of Babel and Egypt, but is not explained, neither is said what the object of the Lord could be to speak in riddles instead of in plain language.—In Chapt. XVIII, Ezekiel asserts that the righteous man shall enjoy a long life, but wicked men shall die.—Chapter XIX, is a lamentation for Israel's princes. Their mother is a lioness, who lay down among lions and nourished her whelps among lions; the first of her whelps is caught and brought in Egypt and the second one is also caught in a pit, and brought to Babylon.—In the next Chapter XX, Ezekiel is ordered to inform the elders of Israel in answer to their application, that the Lord will not be enquired of by them. They were further told that anger would be visited upon them, since for all the blessings showered in old times upon the people, it had constantly rebelled and not kept the statutes of the Lord;—yet in Chapter XVIII: 20, it was solemnly assured, that the iniquity of the father should not be visited upon the son, but the Lord seemed not to remember what he had said.—Thereupon the prophet was ordained to prophesy against the forest of the South. Ezekiel having done so, exclaimed in (v. 49): "Ah Lord God they say of me: Doth he not speak parables"?—This shows that the people did not know what he meant, and whether the prophet understood always his own prophecies we do not know.—Chapter XXI. Another prophecy against Jerusalem follows; the prophet has to set his face towards it; the Lord has drawn his sword against it, the sword is sharpened and burnished not to return to the sheath any more, and the righteous as well as the wicked are to be cut off.—It was thus useless to be righteous any longer!—The next Chapter (XXII.) is again an enumeration of all the abominations of Jerusalem, and in punishment of which her sons should be dispersed.—Many one pretends to perceive a prophecy in this; such one therefore would do well to recollect that in Ezekiel's time the dispersion was already completed; in his first chapter he states himself to have been ordained a prophet five years after Jojoachim, the king of Judah, was carried off to Babylon.—A fair specimen of religion, as understood by Ezekiel and by the Lord, we transcribe from the following Chapter XXIII. 'The word of the Lord came again unto me saying: Son of man, there were two women

the daughters of one mother. And they committed whoredoms in Egypt ; they committed whoredoms in their youth ; there were their breast pressed and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. And their names were Aholah, the elder, and Aholibah, her sister, and they were mine, and they bore sons and daughters. Aholah was Samaria and Aholibah Jerusalem. And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine and she doted on her lovers, the Assyrians all desirable young men, clothed with blue, captains and rulers, riding on horseback. The Lord discovered this, but she did not leave her whoredoms, therefore she was delivered into the hands of the Assyrians, who discovered her nakedness and killed her, carrying off her children. When Aholibah saw this, she became even worse corrupt than her sister in increasing her whoredoms, for when she saw the image of Chaldeans portrayed with vermillion upon the wall, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, she sent messengers unto them in Chaldea, and the Babylonians came into the bed of love, and she doted upon her paramours, whose flesh was as the flesh of asses, and whose issue like the issue of horses. Her fate was similar to that of her sister.—This interesting communication is given in full length in a chapter of some dimension. It teaches the wisdom of the Lord to edify the people in a useful and at the same time entertaining manner.—Also in entertaining style is the next Chapter (XXIV.) where the parable is given of a boiling pot in which the prophet is to boil the best pieces of a mutton and its bones, with some water.—This was intended for a prophecy or an instruction to the people, though we can only perceive in it a recipe for making strong broth.—From this Ezekiel proceeds (in Chapter XXV) to say, that the Lord will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and of Ammon, a couching place for flocks.

CHAPTER XXVI.—Tyrus is threatened ; the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people, she is turned unto me ; I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste." Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, "Behold, I am against thee. O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up, and they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus etc., and it shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, etc."—It is known that Tyrus was besieged by the Babylonians at the same time as Jerusalem, and that the inhabitants fled to the island-city called New Tyre. Ezekiel thus cannot claim this saying of "in the midst of the sea" as a prophecy or inspiration from the Lord, for he flourished at a time subsequent to the taking of those places, so that, it may reasonably be presumed, he knew all about it. The city of Tyrus remained yet for two centuries longer the most prosperous commercial city of the Old World, and though gone to decay afterwards still, a part of her is left till in this present time, and is known under the name of Tyr, also called Sour. The so-called prophecy is thus not true in its saying : "I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more, though thou be sought for ; and thou shalt never be found again."

CHAPTER XXVII.—Contains a description of the wealth of the city of Tyrus, but all shall fall into the midst of the sea.—The next Chapter (XXVIII) threatens the king of Tyrus. Because he thought himself to be a god; he should be brought down to the pit, and die the death of them that are slain in the midst of the sea (v. 8). Then again (in v. 10), he should be killed by the hand of strangers.—This king should accordingly die two deaths.—Chapter XXIX threatens the king of Egypt, who is represented by the Lord as a great dragon in a river; all the fish will stick to his scales, after which the whole concern will be thrown by the Lord in the wilderness. The Egyptians moreover were to be dispersed, but would eventually be formed again into a nation of no power.—We had already occasion before to refer to similar prophecies on Egypt, and to show that quite the reverse occurred; Egypt increased in power and even under the rule of the Ptolemies, the whole of Palestine, (the holy land of the Lord) was under Egyptian sway.—The following Chapter (XXX) is on the desolation of Egypt, and is in the usual style; so is the next (XXXI) speaking of the glory of Assyria and its ruin. Ezekiel's lamentation on the fall of Egypt, which then follows (in Chapt. XXXII,) was rather unnecessary; neither as prophecies nor as literary productions can this writing boast of the slightest value; of the same weight is Chapter XXXIII, where Ezekiel is admonished of his duty as a monitor to his people, responsible for the sin of those that have not been warned by him to mend their ways.—Now the Jews being at that time dispersed over all parts of the civilized world, it is easy to perceive how exceedingly difficult the task of this prophet must have been!—The other remarks in this Chapter are more sensible, inasmuch as it is stated again that the righteous shall live and the wicked shall die, though the Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The further prophecy on the utter desolation, to be brought on the land of Canaan, so that none shall pass through it, is nevertheless rather absurd, for though uninhabited by Israelites, it remained the abode of other tribes.—In Chapter XXXIV the shepherds of Israel are re-proved, and then are the priests and other prophets, but the Lord will save his flock and they shall no more be a prey; he will judge between cattle and cattle “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David and he shall be their shepherd” (v. 23). And I the Lord will be their God and my servant David a prince among them (v. 24).—The Christians claim to perceive in those verses a prophecy of their Jesus; but they forget that Jesus never gathered together the tribes of Israel, already entirely absorbed by other nations when he came into this world; neither was Jesus a shepherd or prince over this people; only very few of the descendants of Jacob acknowledging him as a leader. The prince David in Ezekiel's mind was no doubt, in imitation of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the great Warrior and King predicted by those worthies, but who never made his appearance.—The following two chapters contain nothing of any importance.

CHAPTER XXXVII—XLV.—The prophet was now in a valley, and the valley was full of bones. At the command of the Lord, sinews and flesh grew upon those bones, breath was given to them, and there they stood the whole house of Israel upon their feet, an exceeding great army (with probably no clothes on). The people of Israel and Judah would thus be reunited into one great nation, and David be shepherd, or king, over them, for ever.—This account of a resurrection has probably suggested the idea of a resurrection on a larger scale, prophesied in the New Testament. The Christian prophecy is, however, by far the grandest, as it involves a resurrection in the body of the whole human family from the beginning of the world; we though do not see how it is possible to conceive such an idea, as we positively know that a human body, in which life is extinct, will be entirely decomposed, and feed again other creatures, and thus assume an endless variety of forms, in which it returns to dust over and over again, so that the first creatures would never find their bodies back. Such stories may accordingly have answered for the ignorant people Ezekiel had to deal with, but it is rather too silly to form part of the creed of the people in the nineteenth century.—The next two chapters, XXXVIII and XXXIX, treat on the destruction of Gog.—Chapter XL, entitled by some translators, ‘the time and end of the vision,’ commences: “In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, and in the fourteenth year that the city was smitten.”—This shows conclusively when the so-called prophecies were written, that is, several years or months after the events therein referred to had taken place; when Jerusalem was smitten, Tyrus, Sidon, and the countires of Edom or Idumea, and Egypt, and many others were attacked and overrun by the same Chaldeans.—The two next chapters, XLI and XLII, are entirely devoted to the description and measurement of a house, or temple, by a man of brass, described in the preceding chapter; the object of all this measuring is left to conjecture; then follows the catalogue of animals to be sacrificed in the temple, which is filled with the glory of the Lord, and in which no uncircumcised neither in heart or flesh, will be allowed to enter. The people are further informed (Chapt. XLV) that as soon as they get the land, a portion of 25,000 by 10,000 reeds, shall be set apart upon which to build this sanctuary. The portion to be rendered unto the Lord in meat and wine is also very liberal.—Ezekiel seems to have followed the example of Moses, by amply providing for the Lord.

CHAPTER XLVI—XLVIII.—Ordinances for the prince’s worship is contained in this chapter. The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the East shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and also in the day of the new moon. On those days the people shall worship the Lord and their Prince (the great king David II that is to be), shall bring burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; the exact amount of eatables this prince will have to contribute daily, is given with great minuteness; also of the voluntary offerings to be given in addition.—From this it will appear, that according to Ezekiel the Lord intended to have a good time of it, and that he was as exigent as in the time of Moses; the children of Israel, therefore, might congratulate them-

selves that the said temple was never built. The Christians may, besides, learn from this that the prince mentioned by Ezekiel would have been subject to the Lord, therefore it can have no reference to Jesus of Nazareth, as of him they say, that he is equal to God.—The next chapter, XLVII, is entitled by the translators: “The vision of the holy waters” It states that waters issued from under the threshold of the house of the Lord eastward, the water was deep and contained fish, on its borders grew trees, producing fine fruits, and the leaves were good for healing.—All this is evidently intended by Ezekiel as a promise of a terrestrial paradise; and it cannot be considered as possessing deeper meaning. That Ezekiel intended it to be understood as he wrote, must be conjectured, because though he often makes use of parables and riddles, he accompanies those by a statement that they are such, which he does not do here. The sayings of water that giveth life, and leaves that heal, must therefore not be viewed as prophecies of Jesus’ words, for Ezekiel addresses the children of Israel exclusively; and if the same words are reported to have been used by Jesus, the same can be said of many of his other sayings, evidently borrowed by him from the Old Testament.—In chapter XLVIII Ezekiel divides the land between the children of Israel. Like Moses, whose style he appears to have partly adopted, he disposes of a great deal which he did not possess; like the fellow who sold the skin of a bear before having caught one. The children of Israel never possessed the land according to his disposition, his prophecies remained thus in this unfulfilled, as those of Moses. Although nothing ever came of these splendid promises, there is still in consolation for it that all the prophecies of destruction, etc., equally remained without effect. Ezekiel may therefore have been in his time a great man of the Lord, and a celebrated prophet, but to the unprejudiced reader he can only be considered a great humbug.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

CHAPTER I and II.—Daniel relates how Nebuchadnezzar, after carrying off the Jews in captivity, selected four young men of royal blood from amongst them for service at his court, and of those he was one. They were instructed in the Chaldean language and learning, for three years, when the king found out that they were already ten times wiser than all Chaldean magicians and astrologers.—In the following chapter (II), we learn that Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which troubled him greatly, its interpretation was required. Daniel must have been at that time already an established magician, for he was among those that were to be killed if found incompetent, and the king would put no faith in any dream interpreter who could not also inform him what he had dreamt. In this dilemma Daniel first applied for a respite, which was granted to him and to his three friends, whom he consulted. A vision occurred to him, and after only four days the king’s dream was revealed to him by the Lord.—Why it was not communicated to Daniel at once,

say by inspiration, is not explained, unless the delay was used by some friend of Daniel in obtaining the desired information from the king himself.—'The dream of the king was, that he saw an image with a head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, and its legs and feet of iron and clay ; a stone was thrown against its legs, and down came the image, tumbling to pieces, and carried away by the wind like chaff.—'The interpretation of the dream was simple : the head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar, the silver breast a kingdom of less glory, that was to succeed him, the brass belly a kingdom decreased again, and so on.—Numerous suppositions have been brought up regarding the kingdoms the dream had reference to ; but seeing that there have been so many brass and iron kingdoms since, it may be admitted, therefore, that this dream and its interpretation by Daniel amounts to nothing, notwithstanding all later explanations.—The king was so much pleased with what Daniel said, that he worshipped him, and ordered an oblation and sweet odors to be offered unto him ; Daniel was further made ruler of the whole province and chief of all the governors and wise men in the kingdom.

CHAPTER III and IV.—Nebuchadnezzar, who seems to have been a man of peculiar turn of mind, had made an image of gold, sixty feet high and six feet broad (that is, height to breadth in proportion of ten to one, not exactly according to human structure), and had it put up in the plains of Dura, in the province of Babylon. A herald then cried out to all nations, the king's command, that they should come and worship this image. The three friends of Daniel refused to obey, and after being pinioned by the most mighty men of the army, by order of the king, they were cast into a fiery furnace. No mention is made of Daniel in this case, accordingly we do not know whether he obeyed the command, and if not, how he managed to escape the displeasure of the king, and not share the fate of his friends and co-religionists, we don't know either. Scarcely had they been amid the flames when an angel of the Lord came also in the furnace to keep them company ; and not a hair of their head was singed, not even the smell of fire had passed on them. The king was so struck by this performance, that he declared, that no God could deliver after this manner and hence the God of these three men should never be abused under heavy penalty. This adventure related by Daniel is about as interesting as the account of a dream of the king by the same author, (in chapter IV), the consequence of which was, that the interpretation by Daniel came true, that Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men, and ate grass like an ox, and was wet from the dew of heaven seven years long, until his hair was grown like eagle feathers, and his nails like bird's claws, after which he resumed his business as king, with excellent majesty added unto him.—It reads as if Daniel had drawn upon his imagination for this fact, for it sounds improbable that the Babylonians, the most civilized nation of those times, would have allowed their king, if he became a lunatic, to walk round about in the fields and to live upon grass. The history of Babylon, as written by profane authors, do not mention this singular event.

CHAPTER V and VI.—Belshazzar, a successor of Nebuchadnezzar, once made a feast to a thousand of his lords; he used on this occasion the golden and silver vessels that had been taken out of the temple of Jerusalem; that the king, his princes, wives and concubines might drink therefrom, which they did, praising their gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, and stone. Fingers of a man's hand then came suddenly forth and wrote upon the wall; which all at once set the king trembling, or rather shaking, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another; the wise men of Babylon were immediately sent for to unravel this mystery, and the queen, just entering, suggested that Daniel should come; he made his appearance accordingly, and read: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." The interpretation was Mene "God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it;" Tekel, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting;" Upharsin, "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."—It will be perceived that the Lord, who is supposed to have written these words, used a most remarkable language, so expressive in a few words!—Belshazzar, the king, was slain that same night, and Darius, the Median, took the kingdom.—This story reads somewhat like a fiction, but Daniel being the chief magician, might be expected to talk and write like a magician. According to history, Babylon was taken by stratagem by the Medes, and this chief magician, who was no native of Babylon, may have known the plot that was laid, perhaps even aided towards it; and may have written with his own hand the alarming words.—How it may be, Daniel, at all events, appears to have been in high favor with the conqueror, who appointed him the first of three presidents, to whom the hundred and twenty princes of the whole kingdom should give account; but those princes, governors, counsellors, and captains managed to procure a decree from the king, whereby any one who would ask a petition except of the king, should be cast into the lion's den. Daniel, however, prayed three times a day to the Lord before the open windows, asking favors of him; the law now with the Medes and Persians being very severe, it was enforced in Daniel's case, and he accordingly, much to the king's regret, was thrown into a lion's den. The next morning the king went up early, going to the lion's den, and lo, how agreeably was he surprised to find Daniel sitting among the lions, hale and hearty. An angel had shut the lion's mouth, this explains that miracle at once. Of course Daniel was soon liberated, and his accusers and their wives and children given to the lions, and devoured. The king then issued a decree to all nations, that they should fear and tremble before the God of Daniel as the most powerful of Gods.—It does not appear, however, that the king went further, by adopting Daniel's religion, as he might easily have done after such convincing proof.

CHAPTER VII.—In the first year of Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and a vision when in his bed; and he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters; it was about four terrible monsters with ten large horns and with one small horn, and with teeth of iron, etc.—Perusing this ac-

count, there is no sense to be found in it; nevertheless, because there is spoken of a son of man sitting on a cloud, the good Christian sees here a prophecy on his Christ's coming down on a cloud. Seeing, however, that until now Jesus has yet come down on the cloud, one cannot refer the prophecy to him as long as he has not done such thing; and besides, even if Daniel should have been a man of the Lord, instead of a chief magician, no one in his senses should ever believe that a God would talk nonsense like a madman; wherefore it is not necessary to see a prophecy in this case.

CHAPTER VIII.—This is another vision, of a ram and a goat; both of great power, and with tremendous horns, but the goat was the best of the two after all; it had a little horn that waxed exceeding great, even to the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them, etc. Happily the angel Gabriel was on hand to explain that the ram is the king of the Medes and Persians, and the goat the king of Greece.—According to the explanation as given by commentators, this dream should relate to Alexander the great, king of Greece, and his four successors, one of whom became king of Syria. Judea was afterwards united to Syria, and one of its kings (Antiochus Epifanes) treated the Jews very badly, trying to suppress the religion of the Lord. Comparing the history with this dream, we conclude that if a prophecy, it is a tolerably correct one, and so far superior to all that preceded, that we are almost led to suspect its having been introduced at some subsequent period. This could have happened by accident, as the sacred writings were collected and translated into Greek, and many apocryphal books written, in the days of the Ptolomees, the successors of one of the four kings.

CHAPTER IX.—Daniel, in the first year of king Darius, the Medean, set his face to prayer unto the Lord, that his anger and fury might be turned away from Jerusalem. While he was busy therewith, the angel Gabriel came towards him, with the very interesting information as that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah (meaning anointed), the Prince would be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks; the street should be built again (v. 25).—The interpreters making of days, years, say that 7 weeks and 62 weeks are 483 years; this is a beautiful interpretation, but unfortunately 536 years elapsed between the permission to rebuild Jerusalem and the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, which would show that he was not the Messiah, the 'anointed' Prince, alluded to by the angel Gabriel, neither was he ever a Prince, as he was merely a field preacher and performer of miracles. In the Jewish translation we find this verse (25) somewhat different, for it reads: "Know therefore, and comprehend, that from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed prince, will be seven weeks; and during sixty and two weeks will it be again built with streets and ditches (around it), even in the pressure of times."—Daniel had this vision at the time that Darius, the Medean, just got the kingdom (vide v. 1), very likely

the command to restore and build Jerusalem was given by the former king, seven weeks before Darius came to the Persian throne; and now Daniel, to flatter him and to coax him into ratifying that commandment, calls him an anointed prince (a Messiah), as if chosen by the Lord to deliver his people. We see also in Isaiah, XLV, that Cyrus is called an anointed of the Lord, and why should not Daniel too call another Chaldean king by that name when it could serve for the benefit of the Lord's holy people. We, at least, think he did. And what regards the three scores and two weeks, those relate to the time of building the streets, but not to the time of the Messiah.

CHAPTER X.—In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was now called Belteshazzar, and the thing was true.—This last statement is remarkable, as it seems to imply Daniel's misgivings about the truth of all that preceded.—Daniel, then, was mourning three full weeks, and on the twenty-fourth day he was by the side of the great river Hiddekel; on lifting up his eyes he beheld a man whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz, his body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, his eyes like lamps of fire, and his arms and feet like polished brass, and the voice of his words was like the voice of a multitude. This strange being had been withstood twenty and one days by the Prince of the kingdom of Persia, when Michael, one of the chief Princes, came to help him. Having communicated this, he bade Daniel good-bye, as it was time for him to return to fight with the Prince of Persia.—This fighting seems to have been the principal occupation of the man of gold, fire, and brass.

CHAPTER XI.—This chapter is a prophecy of a political nature; that there shall be three kings in Persia, and the fourth, the most powerful of all by his riches, shall have stirred up against him the king of Greece.—There is some reason to believe that this story was written at a subsequent period (say nearly three hundred years later); as we remarked already in chapter VIII.

CHAPTER XII.—This promises Israel's delivery from their troubles. "And at that time" (says the prophecy) "Michael, the great prince, shall stand up, and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and others to everlasting contempt;" Daniel asked a man who was clothed in linen, and stood near by upon the waters, how that was; and the man told him there would be one thousand two hundred and ninety days before this would take place, but blessed would he be who waited and came to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.—This singular prophecy, which never came to pass, neither after 1290 days, nor 1290 years, the Christians presume to refer to a general resurrection of the dead, as projected in the New Testament, but by Daniel's own words it was only for the children of Israel. This prophecy, as having never happened, is accordingly as much a work of

fiction as the foregoing chapters ; even in point of fact only to be called nonsense. It is probable however, that it is in so far important, as having, with others, suggested to Jesus' apostles the idea of preaching a general resurrection of the dead.

THE PROPHET HOSEA.

CHAPTER I.—Hosea the son of Beeri lived in the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. "And the Lord said unto Hosea : "Go take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and (beget) children of whoredoms." So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And the Lord said unto him : "Call his name Jezreel, for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel." And the woman conceived again and bore a daughter whose name, (also by the Lord's command,) was to be Lo-ruhamah, "for I (the Lord) will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but will utterly take them away" (v. 2-6)—The upshot of the foregoing is, that the house of Israel and Judah were to be visited by the Lord (which as usual meant punishment,) and now in order to give a convincing proof thereof, it was necessary, that Hosea should live with a harlot and beget children of whoredoms, and that those children should have ridiculous names.

CHAPTER II—IV.—Hosea, like one who has hit upon a happy idea, continues in the same strain, and he speaks, evidently, to Jezreel, his first born : "Say ye unto your brethren Ammi and to your sisters Ruhamah : Plead with your mother, plead, for she is not my wife, let her put away her whoredoms etc. etc."—In the next Chapter (III) Hosea is commanded by the Lord to love another woman, beloved by her lover yet an adulteress ; he immediately went in search and got one for fifteen pieces of silver and one homer and a half of barley. All this vulgarity and much more is in illustration of the future of the people of Israel, who he now says shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king (v. 2-b).—Seeing that the people of Israel never returned, and that Judah, though once returned never sought Jesus, the king of the Christians. so it is quite unnecessary to see in this *David* a prophecy of Jesus, as some Christians do like to make it believe.—In Chapt. IV, Hosea speaks his judgments against the priests for committing whoredoms,—this of course is very appropriate coming through a fellow, that dabbled in it so extensively himself.

CHAPTER V and VI.—Hosea prophesies now that Israel and Judah both shall fall

at the same time (which never happened) ; but after two days the Lord should revive them.

CHAPTER VII—IX. The language of the prophet is sometimes a little absurd ; in describing for instance the iniquities of Ephraim he says, in Chapt. VII, the people are all adulterers, as hot as an oven heated by the baker. (v. 4) and Ephraim is like a cake not turned (v. 8). In Chapter VIII he advises to set the trumpet to the mouth for *he* shall come like an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed the Lords covenant.—Who that he is that shall come flying like a blind eagle against the house of the Lord we do not know, but we sincerely hope that he will not have hurt himself while doing so.—In v. 8 and 9 Hosea says : “ Israel is swallowed up, now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure ; for they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself.”—This saying plainly shows ; that Hosea wrote after the events took place, it can accordingly not exactly bear the name of prophecy.

CHAPTER IX—XI. The prophet advises the people to rejoice themselves, though in the end of the chapter, as also in the next one, he promises them all kind of fearful adversities.—Chapter XI, aims at Israel's ingratitude to their God ; the Lord is represented as speaking : “ When Israel was a child, he says, then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt ” (v. 1.)—The evangelist Matthew has thought fit to apply this as a prophecy to Jesus, on account of the word *son* ; but as mention is only made of Israel, an ungrateful son, so Matthew must have been mistaken, or he would not have dared representing Jesus as ungrateful.—The Lord's further statement : “ for, I am God, and not man, the holy one in the midst of thee and I will not enter into the city ” (v. 9),—must be very provoking to Christian bible-interpreters, and prophecy-expounders, who constantly imagine the *holy one* to be an allusion to Jesus, but in this instance, it will be impossible to do it, seeing that Jesus not only entered the city (of Jerusalem,) but entered almost into every city of Palestine.

CHAPTER XII.—XIV treats on Ephraim feeding on wind &c., and contains the Lord's statement : “ Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me, for there is no Saviour beside me (v. 4).—This statement also must be incorrect, for pious Christians feel themselves most happy in believing in a second Saviour.—In his last Chapter (XIV) Hosea prophesies against the inhabitants of Samaria, whose children were to be dashed in pieces and the pregnant women ripped up with swords ; he is however at the same time hopeful to the children of Israel and Ephraim, for they at last shall bloom as the lily and be in beauty alike the olive-tree ; and who is wise, he says, shall understand these things.—With these words the prophet ends his book. We now think that who is wise, will understand that of all what Hosea prophesied, nothing ever occurred, and that the man sought to fool his people in the most abominable language, worth the writing of a person of his kind.

JOEL.

Joel is another great prophet, who declares God's judgments upon the land of Israel. A trumpet shall be blown in Zion and a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, shall come, and wonders shall be shown in the heavens and on the earth, blood, fire, and pillars of smoke, the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the Lord shall come down with his hosts, and they shall devour all the wicked folks; and that day of the Lord shall be great and terrible.—All this was to be for the special benefit of the children of Israel; the christians though pretend this to refer to the day of judgment predicted in the New Testament. This prophecy of Joel must have been composed some 2500 years ago, it is true that the date when all this is to come off, is prudently omitted, but until now nothing of what he prophesied ever came to pass—Joel appears for the rest to have been full of the spirit, for besides that his prophecies never were fulfilled, they contain not a single sentence of a person in possession of a composed mind, and such composition is distinctive to all prophecies said to be spoken by influence of the spirit of the Lord.

AMOS.

Amos was a herd-man and also a prophet; he promised God's wrath to come down upon Syria and Edom and Ammon, etc., and upon Moab, and Judah, with this (in Chapt. II and III); he made the Lord boast of his kindness in having led the people of Israel, the only people he knew of all the families of the earth, through the wilderness for forty years, and to have raised of their young men prophets and Nazarites. The Lord further (in Chapt. IV) says to his chosen people, "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, and when your gardens and your vine-yards, and your fig trees, and your olive-trees increased, the palmer worm devoured them, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I slain with the sword and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord."—The Lord appears to have used strange means to convert the Jews to his worship, and it is not so surprising therefore, that the people preferred to worship Baal Zebub; who did not appear to have inflicted so many miseries upon them.—The inspired herdsman gives, in Chapter V, a lamentation on the virgin of Israel, that is to die and is to rise no more, and gives her at the

same time many exhortations (very much in the way of advising a sick person, while dying, how to live to reach an old age). Then again he promises woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria ;—and in Chapt. VII he gives the judgment of the grasshoppers as a symbolization of Israel's judgment.—In Chapter VIII the Lord showed Amos a basket of summer fruits, as a sure sign of the end having come for his people ;—and in Chapter IX, entitled by the translators “ the certainty of Israel's desolation,” it is stated that though they dig into hell or climb up to heaven, they cannot escape the vengeance of the Lord, for the Lord is sure to catch them.—Though now the fate of Israel would appear to be most hopeless, we at once learn at the end of Amos' prophecy that the Lord will re-establish the kingdom of Israel, their cities shall be rebuilt, and they will again have a king, like in the time of David.—The prophecies of Amos contain, accordingly, only contradictions, notwithstanding which, they never were fulfilled, neither in the one nor the other way. Thus the man Amos may perhaps have been a good herdsman, able to scare cows and oxen, but as a prophet of truth, he was a total failure.

OBADIAH.

Obadiah is another prophet, who twaddles away in the style of prophets about the destruction of Edom. Edom is represented to exalt itself like an eagle, and to build its nest upon the stars ; he therefore speaks his damnation over the people of Edom.—This cursing was, however, harmless, for it never took place. The people of Edom (the Arabs) were never burnt with fire, as he foretold, but became a much mightier nation than Israel ever did.

JONAH.

Although the Lord usually only sent prophets to his chosen people, he commissioned Jonah for this once to go to Nineveh and cry against her. Jonah, though, did not relish this commission, and fled out of the presence of the Lord to Joppa, where he found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid his fare and went into it ; the Lord, however, was not so easily humbugged as that, also he sent a great wind into the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. The

mariners were afraid, and cried, every man unto his God ; they lighted the ship, and finally cast lots to find out for whose cause the evil was sent to them ; the lot fell upon Jonah, who was sleeping at the time ; he accordingly was cast into the sea, and the sea at once ceased raging. And the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish, alive, three days and three nights.—How mighty is the God of Jonah ! Praise to the Lord of the big fishes !—Jonah during this confinement occupied himself with praying, upon which the Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land (Chapt. II). This time Jonah thought better of it, and he obeyed the command to go to Nineveh, but after prophesying all sorts of evil, he found that it was not fulfilled accordingly, wherefore he upbraided the Lord (being evidently under the impression that he was being fooled), but the Lord explained by means of a tree that he let grow and destroyed, that because the people had listened and mended its ways, the destruction of such a large city had better be avoided, for if Jonah could be afflicted about the destruction of a tree, how much more so ought he to be about the destruction of a city.—The book of Jonah is therefore not without interest, as showing that the Lord was, for once, not a destroying and bloodthirsty tyrant ; so that if it contains a little of the fabulous it is nevertheless a pretty moral tale, quite instructive.

MICAH.

This prophet lived in the time of kings Ahaz and Hezekiah, when, according to the Books of the Kings, the Assyrians made their incursions into the Holy Land ; Isaiah and other prophets lived in the same time, and no wonder that in such time of trouble, visionaries were to be found who saw visions of destruction. Their prophecies, on inspection, do not, however, always agree, even as the prophets themselves seem not always to have agreed.—

In Chapter III, Micah accuses all other prophets to prophesy falsely about peace, which was not to be ; they were to be ashamed and confounded ; the chiefs, he says, judge for reward, the priests teach for hire, and the prophets err and divine for money.—As Micah claims to be the only good one, Isaiah, as no special mention in exception is made of him, must be among those that err and divine for money ; which we learn to our great regret.—Micah's prophecy in chapter V is headed in the Christian translation "The birthplace of Messiah foretold," etc. We quote v. 2 : "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, (yet) out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth (have been) from of old, from everlasting."—This, now, is supposed to be a prophecy of Jesus ; but, of Jesus it cannot be

said that he came forth out of Bethlehem, for only of the place where the parents of a child habitually live, and where the child is brought up, can be said of that place came he forth, and the same cannot be said of a place where the mother, while travelling, is accidentally delivered of a child. Though thus the Evangelist say that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he still belonged to Nazareth, and was also generally regarded as belonging to that place, where he lived nearly until his thirtieth year. No more was he ever ruler in Israel, for though he may be considered the head of the Christians, the people among whom he lived denied his claim to leadership in toto, even crucifying him as a criminal. And what regards the sayings of "whose going forth have been from old, from everlasting," this relates not to the ruler, as the Christian expounders would make us believe, but simply relates to Israel, which, according to Micah, is a people of old date.—On further reading this chapter, it will be plain as daylight that Micah only referred to a person that was to deliver the chosen people, by the sword, from bondage. In v. 6 he says: "thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrians." After reading this, we cannot help considering the insertion of the heading of this chapter as a wilful misrepresentation. The great man, to whom the prophecy like those of Isaiah and others referred, was to be a great warrior, a mighty king, like they imagined David to have been. And because David the first had built Bethlehem and lived there, Micah supposed to prophesy quite ingeniously by making David II to be born there also. More than 2,500 years have elapsed since Micah's prophecy, and it is true that this king David II has not yet made his appearance, but this gives therefore no right to the Christians to declare this a prophecy on another man (that never was a ruler in Israel) merely on account of his being born in Bethlehem. With the same right they could relate it to everybody else born there.

CHAPTERS VI and VII.—Like other prophecies, filled up as usual with threats; and the prophet asks whether the Lord will be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, or will he (Micah) give the fruit of his body for the sins of his soul. Without awaiting an answer upon those inquiries, the prophet continues with upbraiding his people, and describes them as to be in a deplorable condition of corruption, the judge judges for rewards, the man cannot trust his best friend now, nor his own wife, and no upright man is more to be found. The prophet closes, however, with the hopeful promise that the Lord will forgive their iniquities, and perform the mercies which he once swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.—Though now this promise sounds sweet, it is nevertheless a pity for the people of Abraham that until now the Lord has not performed his mercies, notwithstanding Micah's opinion.

NAHUM, and HABAKKUK, and ZEPHANIAH.

Nahum and Habakkuk are two prophets of small renown, who prophesy in the style of their predecessors, from whom they could have copied, if they wished. Zephaniah, who comes next, makes a clean sweep of it in the most grandiloquent twaddle that he could put together. A Lord's day of punishment to come off; from the princes down to those that leap on the threshold; there shall be a noise of a cry from the fish gate, and a howling, etc. Jerusalem is all that is bad, her prophets are light and treacherous men, and her priests have poisoned the sanctuary. But the Lord shall avenge himself, his day is at hand, the great day is near, it is near, it hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord.—It is needless to say, that the prophecy concerning that day when the Lord should come down with his host of heaven remained unfulfilled.

HAGGAI and ZACHARIAH.

Haggai is a less assuming prophet, flourishing at the close of the Babylonian captivity, who pretends that the Lord had communicated to him that the temple of Jerusalem must be rebuilt.—Zachariah is more assuming, he had visions in the night sometimes. In Chapter III, he saw the high priest, Joshua, standing with Satan on his right, but the Lord cursed Satan, and he accordingly went off. Joshua now was clothed with filthy garments, which the Lord ordered him to take off, and to put on clean garments instead, for the Lord would bring forth his servant the Branch (v. 8).—This (Branch) was a saying of Isaiah (Chapt. IV), then about two hundred years old, rehearsed this once by Zachariah; it is not likely that this should refer to Jesus, like the Christians presume, whom being God himself, according to Christian belief, could not very appropriately be called the servant the Branch.—It appears by a perusal of Zachariah VI: 12, 13, that this prophet wished to make believe that Joshua, the high priest of that time, who contributed greatly to the rebuilding of the new temple, was the long since predicted Branch of the Lord.—Zachariah had more visions, he saw a stone having seven eyes. In the next chapter he saw a candlestick with a bowl upon the top of it, and seven lamps thereon, besides that two olive trees; the explanation was given by an angel, and so clear, that it would take at least forty angels more to explain what that angel meant.—Zachariah then saw (in Chapt. V) a flying roll, which he measured, and found to be twenty cubits by ten; this represented a curse, according to the angel expounder. He saw a great many more wonderful things, among others, four chariots between mountains of brass, etc.,

and finally he advises the people (in Chapt. VI: 11) to make a crown of silver and gold, and to set it upon the head of Joshua, the son of Josedeck, the high priest; and speak unto him, he says: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall build the temple of the Lord, etc., and rule upon his throne, and be priest upon his throne" (v. 12-13).—From this it would appear that the prophet desired to see Joshua crowned as a kind of pope-ruler over the Jews, therefore he represents him as the Branch selected by the Lord (of Isaiah IV.) That this cannot apply to Jesus, is self-evident, as he never was high priest, nor an occupant of the throne of Jerusalem.

CHAPTERS VIII and IX, and X, contain prophecies and curses upon several counties, cities, etc., all equally remaining without effect; also in Chapter X: 2, he declares himself, "that the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams"—this, at all events, it will be safe to believe, and we shall do so.

CHAPTER XI.—Treats about the punishment of the Jewish nation. The Lord is represented as a shepherd, leading his people or flock with two staves, called 'Beauty' and 'Bands'; one of the staves 'Beauty' was broken, because the flock was not worthy to be leaded with it; the Lord then asked for his reward, and thirty pieces of silver were given; the Lord now ironically said: "a goodly price that I was prized at by them," and so broke his other staff 'Bands,' that the brotherhood between Judah and Israel might be broken; and the money was cast unto the potter, in the house of the Lord.—This story is pretended by the Christians as referring to the betrayal of Jesus for thirty silver pieces, because, however, it is here the Lord of Israel who is presumed to speak, it cannot be Jesus (who, moreover, never was shepherd of Israel or Judah). The reason why the Lord was indignant about the small price, was because the amount of thirty pieces of silver was the price fixed by Moses for a slave (see Exod. XXI: 32), and he deemed himself worth much more. In the Jewish bible we find, instead of "cast it unto the potter," "cast it unto the treasurer of the house of the Lord." The thirty silver pieces of Judas Iscariot were not cast unto the treasurer.

CHAPTER XII.—XIV.—Jerusalem is to be a cup of trembling to her adversaries, and great magnificence in the future is promised to Israel.—The words spoken in v. 10, "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son," are supposed by the Christians to allude to Jesus because he was pierced by the pike of a Roman soldier when taken off the cross. In the Hebrew version we read: "But I will pour out over the house of David and over the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they will look up towards me (for every one) whom they have thrust through; and they will lament for him as one lamenteth for his only son."—That this cannot allude to Jesus is plain, because it is the Lord of Israel (Jehovah) who is represented to speak, and Jehovah and Jesus,

the fisherman of Nazareth, are not the same personage. It has repeatedly been stated that the Lord was the only one, and that there was no Saviour besides him (for instance, Isaiah XLIII : 11, and XLV : 5-6). It is thus unnecessary to pretend that the Lord spoke here in the character of Jesus. The prophet speaking for the Lord very likely meant to say that Israel's repentance for all the wrong they had done, and all the innocent blood they had shed, would be great and satisfactory to the Lord.—In Chapter XIII the prophet mentions that a fountain was to be established in Jerusalem to wash off all sin and uncleanness, as well for the house of David as for the people.—A pity it is that it never was established, for it would certainly have been a great institution.—Thereupon Zachariah proceeds to give some more prophecies.—In his XIVth and last chapter, which we perceive is entitled by the translators "The coming of Messiah, and the glory of his kingdom," without Zachariah's consent, he promises that the Lord shall come down with his host of saints and destroy all the enemies of Jerusalem, and he shall dwell there and be king over all the earth; and there shall be but one Lord and his name shall be 'One' (v. 9).—The Christians wish everybody to believe that this coming down of the Lord alludes to the expected coming down of their Lord Jesus, but seeing that there is specially stated that the Lord of Israel (Jehovah) shall come down, and that there shall be but *one* Lord, so it is impossible to nourish the hope that the second Lord (Jesus) shall come down too at the same time. Though 2300 years have passed away since this, for the Jews so agreeable prophecy, still until now nothing of it has happened.

MALACHI.

CHAPTERS I and II.—Malachi's first chapter is a complaint on Israel's wickedness, and in the second chapter the priests are reproved; the Lord is made to say that he will curse their blessings, yea, that he has cursed them already. "Behold," he says, "I will corrupt your seed and spread dung upon your faces," etc. (v. 3). According to this, and to what follows, the Lord is not only revengeful, but of very offensive manners.

CHAPTER III.—IV.—This chapter is entitled in the old translation, "Of the forerunner and coming of Christ;" the last verse reads: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."—This verse is considered, at once, a prophecy of the coming of Jesus and of John the Baptist.

The Hebrew version differs from it, and reads as if the messenger referred to was actually coming. It reads : "*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall clear out the way before me ; and suddenly will come to his temple the Lord, whom ye seek ; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire for, behold, he is coming, saith the Lord of hosts.*"—All the prophecies, as we have observed, persistently foretold that the Lord of hosts was to come himself down from heaven to reside henceforth in the temple of Jerusalem ; Malachi now not only repeats this promise, but asserts that that event is to take place without delay ; the forerunner of that event is already coming, the messenger of this covenant where the people is longing after. This messenger or forerunner was Malachi himself. 'Behold, he is coming,' will as much say 'behold he is there.' It could never have meant John the Baptist, as he did not come before 500 years later ; and besides, he brought not the message of a covenant the Jews delighted in. The Lord who was expected to come was also not the Lord Jesus, for he was not the Lord the Jews did seek ; nor did he suddenly come to the temple, as he had first to grow many years before he could walk with his parent toward Jerusalem. For the rest, Malachi's saying of "Behold I send a messenger unto thee," is a free imitation of the words of Moses (Exod. XXIII : 20). Moses meant with the angel (messenger) himself, and so does Malachi.

Again, in Chapter IV, the Lord is represented to say : "Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (v. 5).—Malachi having observed that Moses called himself an angel (heavenly messenger) thought, as it seems, himself authorized not only to compare himself also with an angel, but also with Elijah, whom he considered the equal of an angel. To John the Baptist it could not relate, as he was not much of a prophetiser, merely busying himself with washing the people clean in the Jordan ; and besides, he did not come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, for though he is dead now already some 1900 years, that dreadful day has not yet come. Let us, therefore, not bestow the honor of being called 'prophet Elijah' on John, who has no right to it, but let us rather bestow it upon Malachi, who prophesied so many wonderful things, and therefore proved to be a great prophet. It is true that of all that he foretold nothing ever came to pass, but such make no difference, for this he has in common with all the other great prophets ; since none of all these holy men ever prophesied a single word of truth.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MATTHEW.

CHAPTER I.—The man Matthew, called saint Matthew, commences by giving the genealogy of Joseph, the husband of Mary, who was the mother of Jesus. He calls it the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, though he distinctly states in v. 18, that Jesus was offspring of the Holy Ghost, and not of Joseph. This genealogy therefore is not that of Jesus, as one's genealogy is that of his father, and not of his step-father. This, thus, is an error of Saint Matthew.—He further informs us, that an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, prior to his marriage, announcing him not to fear to take Mary as his wife, for that what was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost, and she was to bring forth a son, whose name was to be Jesus, as he was to save his people from their sins. And Joseph married her.—Joseph must have possessed a strong faith in dreams; for the greater portion of men, on discovering their bride in pregnancy, without knowing the cause thereof, would have repudiated such engagement, even if they dreamt no matter how many times, that the Holy Ghost caused it. Such people are perhaps less pious than Joseph, but it may serve as excuse for them, that in all history, ancient and modern, there is no precedent of the Holy Ghost putting young females in the family way; no one therefore could ever suspect the Holy Ghost of such tricks, and even anyone being informed of it in a dream, would be very apt to consider it a very nonsensical dream.—Though now Joseph took Mary as his wife at once, he knew her not till she had brought forth her first born son (v. 24, 25).—Matthew of course states this on purpose, to alleviate all suspicion of Joseph being considered the father of the child. Better however if his marriage had been postponed till after the birth, since some people may be found to suspect the extreme reserve attributed to Joseph, so unnatural to young-married people. It has been asserted that this marriage became urgent, in order to furnish a protector to Mary, but we most respectfully submit that this protection might have been left much more appropriately with the Holy Ghost and that it was rather hard to put it on the shoulders of Joseph, the more so as it can scarcely be conceived, that this individual could feel himself under obligations for the strange conception of his bride.—The child Jesus was born in due time, and from the further history it will appear, that in outward appearance it

was very much like other children; this is remarkable indeed, as it might reasonably have been supposed that instead of flesh and blood, it would have been of a more spiritual nature. It is true that the child will also have had a soul, wherefore the christians will probably attribute the production of the body to the mother and the spiritual part to the Holy Ghost. It may however be observed that the production of a creature as far as concerns its body, is considered by the present physiologists to be the joint offspring of its father and of its mother, but what concerns its spiritual part or soul, this is considered to be a gift of Providence, or spoken in other words, to be attracted by the ambrio when enough developed to receive life. According to this view the Holy Ghost would have been instrumental in merely a animal procreation. Who would have thought this of the Holy Ghost! And then to take the bride of another for such purpose! In reference to pious believers, who hold the Holy Ghost in high esteem, we shall pass it over, without lecturing on the immorality of adultery.

The name of the child was to be Jesus, for he was to save his people from sin, according to the angel.—The angel was very kind, no doubt, for Joseph could now save himself the trouble of inventing a name. This name Jesus however was very common among the Jews, it had no significance with any other man, and we are therefore at a loss to see, how we are to understand from that name that Jesus was to save his people from sin. Besides Jesus never saved his people, 'the Jews' (for he was one himself,) on the contrary he has made them, if possible, more miserable, as they have since been considered the descendants of his murderers and ill treated on that account. The angel therefore made a mistake—Equally mistaken was the angel in v. 22 and 23, when he stated, that all this was done that might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel."—Now Jesus was never called Emmanuel; the angel himself ordering his name to be Jesus, and Jesus and Emmanuel are different names, having not much in common. The words of the prophet referred to, are to be found in Isaiah VII: 14, but they do not in the least allude to Jesus, as we fully demonstrated in commenting on those prophecies. The prophet spoke to king Ahaz, promising that a child should be born to him from a young woman and before that child should be able to talk, Ahaz would be delivered of his enemies Rezin and Jekah, who annoyed him greatly. It was a personal promise to Ahaz, so that it can never be supposed that Jesaya thought then of Jesus, who lived almost eight hundred years later.

CHAPTER II.—When Jesus was born in Bethlehem there came wise men to Jerusalem, saying: "Where is he, that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him."—These wise men must have been indeed awfully wise, if they could read from the stars, that a king was born to the Jews. Their reading was not correct however; for Jesus never was king of the Jews. Like most people of great learning, those wise men must also have had strange peculiarities, for what use could it have been to those

foreigners whether a king was born to the Jews. Strange again, that they should have made inquiries in Jerusalem, while the star pointed them the way. It is certainly difficult to have no other guidance than a star, as they might easily have gone good many miles one way or the other without finding a material difference in their astronomical observations, but they were wise men, and already having been able to find their way by the star as far as Jerusalem, they might as well have found it to Bethlehem.—When king Herod heard of those things he was troubled; he gathered all the chief priests and the scribes together to learn from them, where the Christ would be born; and they said unto him, in Bethlehem, for thus it was written by the prophet.—Matthew here gives, somewhat modified, the words of Micah V: 1, where is spoken of a ruler of Israel coming forth out Bethlehem. On commenting on Micah we then demonstrated, that this could never have referred to Jesus as a prophecy, as he never was a ruler of Israel. Moreover it is not yet so very certain, that Jesus was actually born in Bethlehem, for as it is evident, that Matthew constantly adapts prophecies to his history of Jesus, he may equally in reverse, have adapted the history to some prophecies; and who would blame a person using his best abilities to convert the ignorant masses to a soul-saving creed!

Joseph was now urged in a dream to flee into Egypt, as Herod the king would seek to destroy the child Jesus. Joseph at once complied. This was, says Matthew, in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled, which says: "Out of Egypt have I called my son."—These words are taken of Hosea XI: 1, and refer to Israel's (the Lord's son) delivery of Egypt. For Jesus was not the son of the Lord, but of the Holy Ghost.—Joseph and Mary with the child had left in good time, for Herod, who did not wish another king of the Jews, caused all the children under two years in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof to be slain. This was, says Matthew, according to the prophet Jeremiah: "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children."—This of course is very appropriate! for Rama is not Bethlehem; the two places were situated quite in different directions of Jerusalem. Yet it is here remarkable, that Herod should have committed such cruelties on no other ground than on the communication of the strange wise men that a king had been born, whilst there was even no danger for his dynasty. Herod was only a Roman Governor, and though called king by the Jews, the title was not hereditary. And then, of that cruel murder of so many innocent babies, God would have been the inducement; for though, according to Matthew, he forbade the wise men to give warning to Herod, he did it after they had done it already, which he as God ought to have known very well. Now, why could God have acted thus cruelly? He acted thus in order that the prophecy of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, that said: there is a voice of lamentation in Rama! Really the name of God the father can not well be applied to him for passing by the fact that Jesus was not his child, the murder of all the little babies in Bethlehem would lead to show, that he had no fatherly feelings at all, even not in the remotest degree.—Matthew further goes on to say, that after the death of

Herod, Joseph returned with Mary and the child from Egypt and dwelt in Nazareth ; in order that might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, " and he shall be called a Nazarene."—Now searching in the bible, no such prophecy will be found therein. Matthew must consequently have derived this from some apochryphal source.

CHAPTER III.—In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea.—One would suppose from these words that John commenced to preach in the days that the child Jesus was just returned from Egypt, but according to Luke Chapt. I, John was only six months older than Jesus, so Matthew must be mistaken. It is remarkable that John selected such an uncomfortable place as a wilderness for his preaching and baptizing, as there could have been no people to preach to and perhaps not always plenty of water for baptizing.—He appears to have had, commonly, as text of his preaching, " Repent Ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—According to this, John did what all the great men of the Lord did before him, that is, prophesying a great day when the Lord would come down from heaven to establish his kingdom on earth.—Matthew informs us further, that the coming of John has been foretold by Isaiah.—We had occasion to remark in Isaiah, (XL), that Matthew is in this greatly mistaken, as John did not prepare, nor made straight a way, neither for the Lord Jehovah, nor for the Lord Jesus ; since the path of neither of them was made straight, not by any means, but remained rather crooked. The prophecy therefore is not well admissible.—The said John had his raiment of camel's hair, says Matthew, and his meat was locusts and wild honey.—Matthew appears to have been under the impression, as if John was therefore far superior to any prophet who ate bread. This incident would however only lead us to believe, that John feared his preaching would not meet with sufficient patronage, wherefore he had to resort to the above eccentricities so as to attract the attention of the public.—" And all Jerusalem and Judea and all the region round about the Jordan went out to him, and he baptized them all, they confessing their sins." When John saw several Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said (somewhat uncourtously) : " Ye, generation of vipers, who has warned ye to flee from the wrath to come."—This question of course implies a serious threat, which must have been, that the day of wrath and darkness was near, when all gentiles and impious folks were to be trampled under foot as had been prophesied. The Pharisees and Sadducees seem, according to John, to have belonged to those condemned, and to have had most to fear from the wrath to come. Fortunately however to them, all those impious Pharisees and Sadducees appear to have died a natural death, the terrible day having never arrived.—John the Baptist propounded more such threats, as, that the axe was laid unto the root of the tree, that would not bring forth good fruit, to be hewn down and cast into the fire.—John evidently meant to convey again the impression that the day was near for all impious people to be destroyed ; a great many impious people however have lived since John ! It is therefore excusable to believe, that John failed in his prophecies.—He further

announces that the one who would come after him would be mightier than he.—As we understand that John was of about the same age as Jesus, this could scarcely refer to him; but John prophesied a day of the Lord: Thus, he meant that the Lord (Jehovah) who would come on that day of wrath was mightier than he (John).

And Jesus came from Galilee to be also baptized; but John forbade, wishing to be baptized by Jesus; the latter insisted, however, and John complied at last. And when Jesus was baptized, and was coming up out of the waters, he saw the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven was heard, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Now, it appears in the first part of this chapter, that John baptized to forgive sins and to allay the wrath to come; if Jesus was without sin, as might be expected from a Son of the Holy Ghost, this baptizing-ceremony could be of no service to him, and by taking part in it, he proved himself pleased with a feigned show of piety. Perhaps, though, it was not superfluous, owing to the announcement by the Lord that Jesus was to be considered his beloved Son. In our humble opinion, this declaration would, however, have been of much greater efficiency, if it had been made when Jesus was in Jerusalem; this might have led to the conversion of a great many people;—but it may be the Lord preferred the moment that Jesus, divested of all worldly attire, stood there before the people in his undisguised magnificence. Because the voice was heard from heaven (while the Holy Ghost was upon Jesus), the voice is considered to have proceeded from God. Thus God assumed an unjust paternity. The Christians, however, admit his declaration, and call him God the Father, we therefore shall also give him that name, but only in order to make distinction between the different Gods. That the Holy Ghost assumed the shape of a dove during his descent, is strange, for though a dove is a pretty bird, kind and amiable, it still is not to be considered a fit representative of a powerful Ghost, and the lookers on were hardly to be blamed if they should have believed that the performance was only that of a tamed and trained pigeon coming to rest on her master's shoulder. And if those people, instead of believing the voice to come from heaven, had suspected it to proceed from a tree in the neighborhood, they would probably have given a proof of sagacity, superior to that of succeeding generations, that really think it came out of heaven. It is a pity that now-a-days the Lord no more let hear his voice out of heaven, so as to stir up the faith of the Christian community. More than 18 centuries have passed away, but we neither hear nor see him, also heaven opens no more; and even with the best telescopes we cannot discover the least part of it. If yet the Holy Ghost, in its pure form of an innocent bird, would sometimes come down, and strengthen our belief in the precious stories of Saint Matthew, how delightful that would be! But alas, he also disappoints our pious wishes, persistently declining to make his appearance again.

CHAPTER IV.—Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil (v. 1).—So the Spirit, after showing itself so favorably to Jesus, led him into bad company after all ; this shows that it was unsafe to place faith in his friendship. Jesus, it appears, had to go through temptations ; we would have considered it a great deal kinder in the Spirit to keep him out of them. The good Christians claim, however, that God and the Spirit (Holy Ghost) desired to find out if Jesus could resist the temptation of the Devil. Ordinary people, they say, make inquiries before filling a situation, and God of course had a much better right to do likewise, the more so, as the mission of Jesus was to have a direct bearing upon the well-being of the whole human family. This is undoubtedly good reasoning, supposing that God cannot judge of people without first having convincing proof of their fitness ; but as we learned that God is omniscient, and knows the inward man at a glance, we submit that Jesus might have been excused from this temptation. The Devil, it would further appear, resides in the wilderness. According to some, the devil is in the heart of men, which in other words would mean that the germ of evil is in man's heart ; but Jesus, a saint, could have no evil within him, and thus the Devil appears to have been a self-existent being, and, at that time, residing in the wilderness of the holy land.

Forty days and forty nights Jesus fasted in the wilderness, and when at last hunger became fierce, the Tempter came to him in time, saying :—“ If thou be the Son of God, command that those stones be made bread.” Common sense would seem to suggest, that the Tempter gave no bad advice at all events, but the Son of God, of course judging matters by uncommon sense, peremptorily answered : “ Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God ”—This answer was no doubt uncommonly sublime, though it does not prove, that after forty days of fasting, some bread would not be very acceptable ; besides, the words that proceed from the mouth of God are so scarce now-a-days, that all pious Christians, who would live on such diet, would soon starve to death. That this theory is incompatible with the laws of nature, will require no comment ; even those most given to fanaticism, would decline the trial of such theory. That saint Jesus should not have eaten anything during forty days and nights, was never witnessed by any one, the devil excepted, and as we cannot communicate with that individual, we shall have to take Matthew's word for the truth of it. Moses also fasted forty days and nights on Mount Horeb ; we may believe this, because Moses said so himself. Mahomet, though no man of the bible, also fasted forty days and nights in the wilderness. Should we believe Mahomet ? No, we are no Mahometans. But all that has been told of Jesus, we must believe, for faith in him carries people into heaven.—When now the devil saw that the first temptation was unsuccessful, he took Jesus up and put him on the pinnacle of the temple.—This shows, that in addition to his well known slyness, the Devil is of immense muscle, for the carrying of a man out of the wilderness on the pinnacle of the temple, is truly superherculean. The mildness of Jesus also shows to

good advantage for allowing himself to be carried first by the Spirit, and then again by the Devil, whichever way they pleased.—While Jesus was seated on the pinnacle of the temple of Jerusalem, the Devil tempted him to jump down, for, said he, it is written, “He (the Lord) shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy feet against a stone.” Jesus, with great moderation, replied, it was written again, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”—Perhaps the Devil thought the angels would not be in time to bear Jesus up, and there would be a chance to see him breaking his neck. The Devil was, however, frustrated of his supposed enjoyment, though he was right in suspecting the backwardness of the angels; for they, at a later period, did not even prevent that the feet of Jesus were nailed to the wood, which is much worse than dashed against a stone.—Fortunately, the Devil again got the idea to take Jesus up and to carry him away; for otherwise, in all probability, he would have starved to death on the pinnacle of the temple. The Devil then carried him to the top of a high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, saying: “All these things will I give thee, if you wilt fall down and worship me;” but Jesus said: “Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” The Devil seems have had enough by this reply, for he left him at once.—Jesus, now left alone, and nobody to carry him, must have had quite a tiresome journey to get home again, for neither in Palestine, nor anywhere on the face of the earth, exists there a mountain high enough to overlook all kingdoms, even if the earth were level instead of round. We may therefore suppose that Satan took Jesus to some mountain of the moon, whence they could observe all the different kingdoms of the earth, while she was revolving; supposing thereby they possessed sharp eyes, which may be supposed, as well from the Son of the all-seeing God, as from the Devil, whose principal occupation seems to be to spy out the weak points. That the Devil assumed the right to dispose of all the kingdoms, was highly impertinent, to say the least; for is it not that Christians as well as Jews agree that the whole earth was created by the Lord, who alone can dispose of her as he may deem proper? This impertinence of the Devil to offer such a large part of the earth to Jesus, is therefore most surprising, as the Lord could not be supposed to have allowed such an illegal transfer with impunity; and besides, Jesus was, as an adopted Son of the Lord, much more powerful than the Devil; hence the temptation to bow for the Devil could not be very great, still the more so, since God the Father, according to the statements which are to follow, intended to transfer to him all power to rule in heaven and on earth; accordingly more than the Devil offered him. Though thus we admire, to a certain degree, the resistance to temptation by Jesus, in the two first cases, yet in the latter case we see no cause to do so; and should we confess what we think of the three temptations combined, we think it forms a story not precisely of a veridical appearance, but looking much more like a fable. Also, it might be the Lord ordered the Evangelist to make up such a story in order that he (the Lord) might have an opportunity to dis-

cover how far human faith would go in believing absurdities. This time it was a good absurdity, a thorough one, and thereby he could be enabled, at once, to discover who was possessed of faith and who was incredulous. If we surmise this, it is because it is evident that the Lord was bent upon making experiments.

After this, Jesus again made his appearance in Judea, but on learning that John the Baptist was in prison, he left at once for Nazareth, and on arriving there went on to Capernaum (a town to the north of the lake of Galilee). This took place, says Matthew, that the prophecy might be fulfilled, stating "that the land Zebulon is the Galilee of the people, and the people that are in darkness shall see a great light."—We do not see that this prophecy amounts to much, the more so, as the removal of Jesus to Capernaum was of his own accord. Even if there had been foretold, that the Branch would go to the land Zebulon this would prove nothing, for all who would wish to have this prophecy applied to themselves, would simply have to go thither.—From that time Jesus began to preach, saying: "Confess your sins, for the kingdom of heaven is coming."—This preaching was similar in every respect to that by John the Baptist and many of the former prophets. Thus far no other than terrestrial kingdoms have had existence in this world; it is true the Chinese call their kingdom a celestial one, but we shall not include them as being outside of Christianity. The approaching of the heavenly kingdom has consequently not proved so near at hand as Jesus would make it appear; and the people of his time could not with right, be told to confess because of its coming. Jesus thus evidently tried to frighten the people around him with a prediction that never came to pass, so that his first and principal preaching was in fact only a falsehood. Pious Christians attempt to excuse him, on the plea that his words should be taken in a spiritual and not in a worldly sense; but to our understanding it is not clear what mysterious signification there can possibly be attached to a celestial kingdom on earth in a spiritual sense. There can be therefore only one explanation, to wit, the happiness of man on earth as presumed that a being will be in heaven, and hence total freedom from sin, under the government of a heavenly ruler. Now, everybody will acknowledge that such a kingdom on earth was not near in the time of Jesus, since that 1800 years have passed away, and it is not yet there; and further, on looking at the many imperfections and bad passions among men, it may safely be concluded that such a heavenly kingdom will not come into existence yet for a considerable time to come. The above will show that the celestial kingdom on earth never existed, not even in a spiritual sense, and that our assertion that the first preaching of Jesus was a falsehood, is not exaggerated at all; we could go further, and show that the Christian religion, instead of bringing heavenly peace among men, has led to sanguinary wars, disputes, and religious fanaticism. Yea, no religion in this world, led to such murders, cruelties, extortions, and oppression of every description, as the so-called sacred and only soul-saving Christian church; and this would be,

according to the Christians, the kingdom of heaven on earth so repeatedly prophesied.

And it came to pass that Jesus walked near the lake of Galilee, and he saw two brothers, Simon, afterwards called Peter, and Andrew, who cast out the nets, for they were fishermen; and he said to them: "Follow me, and I shall make you fishers of men," and they followed him.—It may be surmised that those two men knew Jesus already, for they would probably not have been willing to follow a stranger, without first ascertaining his motives; this must have happened, therefore, in consequence of some previous understanding. The saying of Jesus, "I shall make you fishers of men," does not denote in Jesus an exalted love of mankind, but merely that he considered them some sort of a mob, of which as many as possible should be converted in view of his own ulterior objects.—Jesus further saw two other brothers, James and John, they also were called upon to follow him, which they did. Accompanied by these fishermen, he travelled all over Galilee, preaching and healing sickness and disease; and people from great distance came to him to be healed, even those that were lunatic and possessed of the devil, and many were his followers.—At all times, even to the present day, have there existed successful travelling mountebanks or quacks; in country towns particularly, one often hears of such ones, and the unsophisticated country people often relate with great seriousness of their miraculous cures; still it is generally difficult to see the patients so miraculously preserved, they are usually living too far off, while the patients in the neighborhood are seldom so fortunately cured. The reason simply is, that such philosophers, usually by uncommon gesticulation, accompanied by some mysterious words, impose upon the simple-minded, and aided by strong ingredients of the apothecary, sometimes affords some temporary relief to the sufferer, thereby conveying the impression to the looker on that the cure is fully effected, while the same is only existing in the excited imaginations of the by-standers, and yet magnified by their desire to talk. The healings performed by Jesus must have been very remarkable, as the story goes, but this does not prove that they were of another order, it only proves that his operations were carried on a large scale. In proof that the object of Jesus was to attract the admiration of the ignorant masses, may be mentioned that he selected for his field a distant part of the country, where civilization will have been backward, and the people consequently much more inclined towards the miraculous; and also, that he searched not so much the benefit of the benighted themselves, as the admiration of his powers else he might have healed them with less ostentation at their own homes, in the absence of the curious. And then, moreover, he claimed to heal those that were devil-possessed, by ejecting the devil. Now, we know that there is no room for a devil to reside in a human body, he must therefore have been guilty of deceit; and why? No other reason can be found than in order to make his miracle appear more than it actually was, and to astonish tee many. People at all events are not allowed to deny that Jesus made his performances for any other object than to be looked upon by the people as an agent of the Lord. Thus,

instead of using convincing reasonings to prove the sacredness of his mission, God, according to this opinion, preferred to resort to the tricks of a conjurer.—As well a jack-pudding might have answered the purpose.

CHAPTER V.—And seeing the multitudes, Jesus went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him, and he said : “ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (v. 3).—To be poor in spirit, must mean deficient in intellect ; we always thought, however, that intellect was the most beautiful gift of Providence to man, as constituting his superiority over the animal ; all on earth is subject to his sway through his intellect ; and more than this, it enables him to admire that which is created, and by investigation to obtain the conviction that there exists a higher than human wisdom ; but no, the Son of God thought differently, and appreciated this precious gift but little ; according to his views, it was enough that his followers got just sufficient intellect to believe, without examination, all that he chose to preach.—He further taught : “ blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (v. 4).—The Son of the Lord appears to have ignored that a villain may mourn as well as a pious man ; a burglar may mourn over an unsuccessful burglary, as much as a philanthropist over the failure of a charitable purpose. But according to Jesus, it was enough that one mourned ; by doing so diligently, comfort would be reached. If Christians were to follow this precept, it would make a pleasant world indeed. There is a truth as old as the world, that those who labor, have promoted progress and civilization, while woe-cryers and lamenters never were of any service, but rather were a nuisance to society.—His next teaching was, “ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (v. 5).—Jesus forgot again that the meek may have a good many faults, his blessing them, therefore, was rather indiscriminate. The meek followers of Jesus did besides, not enjoy much of their blessedness, they all died without inheriting the earth.—“ Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (v. 6).—This undoubtedly was a great consolation for the followers of Jesus, lovers of righteousness ; more than 1800 years have elapsed, however, since he promised them the granting of such wish, and still on earth iniquity reigns supreme. Yet, a great many people hunger and thirst after righteousness, and would be greatly gratified to see iniquity swept off the world, but in spite of this promise of Jesus, this blessed state of things never came to pass.—He further taught, “ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (v. 7).—This was encouraging mercifulness, no doubt, but experience does not show that there was much truth in his teaching, for often it happens that a kind action meets with ingratitude in return ; neither can it be said that mercy begets bliss ; a certain self-satisfaction of having done well is the only return, but it procures no bliss for life. There may be those who pretend that Jesus, in speaking of mercy, alluded to a future life, but it is not probable that he spoke in that sense, for since he promised a heaven on earth, all his promises should be understood in the same way. Also, such promise of a future life, without a convincing proof or guarantee of

some sort, would amount to nothing, since no person ever returned after death to confirm if Jesus spoke the truth or not.—His next teaching, “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God” (v. 8), is on a par with the foregoing, and may scarcely be believed without convincing proofs, for no pure of heart ever saw God during life, and if so honored after death, was never reported.—“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (v. 9).—We do not perceive what blessing can be derived from being called a child of God; it may be an honorable title, flattering to vanity, such title still can confer no bliss; moreover, all sorts of people, good or bad, can call themselves children of God; the first men were products of God, and also of course their descendants. The statement made by Jesus has besides never come true, as a great many centuries have passed away, and peaceable persons have never been designated by that title. The most active Christians also never excelled as peace people; hence, perhaps, they did not come into the enjoyment of that appellation.—“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (v. 10).—Now, in our opinion, it can never be blissful to be persecuted, perhaps when afterwards in the promised kingdom, they who suffered persecution may enjoy much bliss, but no proof thereof can be adduced. And seeing that the kingdom of heaven on earth did never come, and that a kingdom in heaven in the firmament was never seen, therefore we believe that those who are not annoyed with persecutions may deem themselves happier with more certainty than the persecuted. For the rest such promises of heavenly blessing are easily made, and are cheap. Mahomet also promised to his followers that those who died for the faith would go to paradise in heaven, but whether they found the paradise remains a question.—“Blessed should be those who would be reviled and persecuted for Jesus’ sake, for great would be their reward in heaven” (v. 11, 12).—This is precisely like the promise of Mahomet, very encouraging indeed, but without guarantee for its fulfilment. Jesus certainly asked rather much when he required that people should submit to persecution only for his pleasure.—After this important teaching, Jesus says to his audience, that they are the salt of the earth, and asks, “but if the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?” (v. 13).—There came no answer to this question, probably for the simple reason that there was no answer for it. In fact, that question is also but sheer nonsense, and it is not even clear why it was brought about at all. Jesus, in his new mode of preaching, lost, it seems, the thread of his discourse, what hardly could have been expected of the son of so wise a father.—He continues to his audience. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid (v. 14). A candle is not put under a bushel, but on a candlestick” (v. 15).—After this interesting communication, the son of God exhorts his audience to let their light shine before the people.—Jesus first states in his sermon that the poor in spirit would be blessed, that theirs was the kingdom of heaven; he should not require, therefore, that his followers let shine their light before the people, for in the first place could that light not be of much importance, and if it were too brilliant, they would

be in danger of losing that kingdom of heaven altogether, it being only for the poor in spirit.—The people should not think, said Jesus (v. 17), that he was come to destroy the law or the prophets, but he was to fulfil it.—If this be true, no Christian follows the teaching of Jesus, as they do not keep the Jewish laws at all. Jesus, though, spoke not the truth when stating that he did not destroy the law or the prophets, since this is exactly what he did; the principal point in the laws of Moses was the worship of only one God. “I am the Lord thy God, and there is no God beside me,” said Jehovah; but Jesus taught that he was the equal of Jehovah, and this of itself was a sufficient subversion of the law and the prophets.—“For verily I say unto you,” he continues (v. 18) “till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”—Every Christian will be obliged to acknowledge that a great many jots and titles of the Jewish law are passed by them, even we make bold to say not one jot or tittle do they follow, consequently Jesus did not speak the truth. How little reliance, therefore, is there to be placed on his repeated stately exclamation: “for verily I say unto you,” if he had said, “for *unverily* I say unto you,” he would have spoken with much more correctness.—“Whosoever therefore,” says Jesus, “shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (v. 19).—Now, as that which Jesus taught was in direct contradiction of the first of the commandments, given by Moses, only a very subordinate place in the kingdom of heaven could be assigned to him; and his followers, the Christians for the same reason, could never be entitled to be called great in that kingdom. This must be unpleasant for a pious Christian, for who would not, in return for piety, expect to be called great hereafter. According to this version, it will also be perceived that in that excellent kingdom there is class-distinction. The general idea, thus, that death does away with such distinction, is quite erroneous.—While Jesus, in the above sermon, shows off his wisdom, he gives a passing hint to the Scribes and Pharisees, fully showing that not one of them will ever get into the kingdom to come (v. 20).—It may be supposed, however, that there were some few virtuous Scribes and Pharisees, whatever they may have been as a class, and it is to be hoped that God, the Merciful, will not have cast them out as unconditionally as his Son did, and may have sent them to some blessed spot somewhere without the limits of the blessed kingdom.

Jesus gives further proof of the excellency of his judgment, saying: “That whosoever is angry with his brother without cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother ‘Raca,’ shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say ‘Thou fool,’ shall be in danger of hell fire” (v. 21, 22, 23).—Some may think that the Son of God was rather severe and unreasonable in his judgment, but they ought to remember that Jesus was favorable to a people poor in spirit, he may therefore have wished to see them free from ridicule, by putting a heavy penalty upon people offend-

ing them; and he may also have been aware, more or less, of having said himself things poor in spirit, and therefore have been anxious to prevent his being called 'thou fool.' Fortunately, however, that his menaces cannot count for more than his promises, there being not the slightest guarantee for the fulfilment of either.—“If thou bring thy gifts to the altar, etc., first be reconciled to thy brother,” he says, “and then come and offer thy gift” (v. 20 and 24).—This no doubt is an exceedingly meek precept, and those who wronged may do well to act accordingly; but the meek Jesus forgot that the one who first went up to the altar to offer might be the wronged party, who would be most decidedly wrong to sue for reconciliation, as the party who committed the wrong would therefore be strengthened in his misdemeanor, and be tempted to wrong the other yet more.—“To agree quickly with an adversary, lest one be delivered by the adversary to the judge and officers, and be cast into prison,” is a precept of the same meekness as the preceding one;—in following it up, meekness would be carried too far, and might most appropriately lead one to be called ‘thou fool,’ for who, thinking right to be on his side, would tamely surrender such right solely for fear of a trial? Such a person would soon be at the mercy of the whims and the avarice of others. It moreover betrays a total absence of manliness in him who could bring such notion forth.—Jesus continues, “Whoever looketh on a woman and lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (v. 28).—From this it would appear that Jesus entertained much more exalted notions of decency than his father, the Holy Ghost, who made light enough of adultery; Jesus, however, might as well have observed that persons of different sex possess a natural inclination to each other, which inclination is innate, and claims its rights without control of the will of the individual, wherefore Jesus ought not to blame so much the individual on that account, but rather ought to have addressed his remonstrances to God, as the originator of this state of things. Whereas now Jesus differed in his views with God, he would have acted more to the point not only by prohibiting that men should look at women, but by ordering that they should reside in different cities; yet he ought not to have omitted to prohibit women to look at men, as this is pretty sure to lead to said mischief.

In v. 29 Jesus teaches something rather extraordinary: “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”—This resembles greatly the language of a lunatic, and leads one to believe that the religious enthusiasm of Jesus utterly confounded him.—It is well known that fanaticism is a first step towards lunacy, and even may end in raving madness.—In v. 30 he advises to act in the same manner with the right hand, to cut it off, so that the whole body could not be cast into hell. It seems Jesus had enough sense left him to understand that if part of the body was parted with, it was impossible to have a whole body cast into hell.—He informs us thereupon that whosoever shall put away his wife save for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery (v. 32).—This may contain much wisdom, though it is not very plain why

he is an adulterer who marry the woman. And then how can this be made to agree with his statement in Chapter XIX: 29, "that whoever shall forsake his wife, &c., for his sake, was to inherit everlasting life."—Jesus goes on to forbid to make oath "the communication be yea yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil" (v. 33-37).—Jesus followers however paid always very slight attention to this commandment, for with all Christians, only excepted two small sects (the Quakers and Anabaptists), swearing is practised very extensively. But it may be the pious Christians did not know what Jesus meant, since he speaks of swearing by God's throne and by the Footstool of his feet, and by Jerusalem the city of the great king &c.; the Christians now, on no longer hearing of these things, have probably thought themselves at liberty to swear away by the great God himself.—Jesus orders further, that whosoever smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also (v. 38-39).—This again is a most unpractical precept, for it presupposes a most unnatural meekness or the most abject cowardice; not to mention the danger to be killed in that way when having to do with a person of uncontrollable temper. Human nature will never comply with this commandment; it could also only have originated in the brain of the timid, among whom we now suppose Jesus might be ranked.—Of the same weight is his following order, "that if any man will take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (v. 40).—This is an excellent method to get rid of one's worldly possessions; the unpracticable and nonsensical of these commands is so evident as to render all comment superfluous.—And what to think of a precept, that whosoever shall compell thee to go a mile go with him twain (v. 41).—Jesus forgot that one by complying with such order might overdo the thing, and go too far for the message; it implies, besides, an abundance of leisure to waste the precious time.—Equally unpractical is Jesus' order (v. 42) to "give to him that asketh thee, and from him that will borrow of thee turn not thou away."—It can easily be appreciated what a compliance with this order would lead to; and yet it could only be successfully practised by millionaires, who tired of wealth, should desire to get poor as soon as possible.—The meek Jesus then teaches (v. 43-44): "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."—If Jesus had said, "Be forgiving and return no evil for evil," surely no man could have objected to this, but to require us to love our enemies and those who injure us, is rather too much, the more, as love is not subject to command, but the offspring of impulse beyond the control of our will. This order therefore is not only extravagant, but like the others wholly unperformable.—So his injunction to be perfect, like the Father which is in Heaven is perfect (v. 45-48), is even unperformable.—Jesus, no doubt, supposed the Father in Heaven to be truly perfect and now the supposition that Man, subject to all passions, might be equally perfect, is super-extravagant indeed, to say the least of it.

It is striking on perusal of this Chapter, in the first place, in what a high degree Jesus must have been tainted with fanaticism, and of what a timid disposition he must have been to give such precepts. In the second place it is remarkable, how few of

his precepts were complied with by the Christians, though they always pretend to be his faithful followers. It would even be easy to show, that the Christians do not follow a single one of them : they do not observe the Jewish law and commandments ; they are not allowed to swear, though swearing most extensively in all christian countries ; they must invariably give away all that is asked of them, nay more, but the christians do not do so, rather do the contrary ; they must submit to personal insult, be robbed, be beaten, be sent on errands ; they must even love their enemies and bless those that curse them ; the Christians instead, constantly waged war with each other ; they moreover never ceased to dispute on religious points, and those that were orthodox amongst them, invariably, hated with supreme cordiality those that differed in opinion ; this hatred was, and is, so intense, that if they had full liberty, they would fly at each other and tear one another to pieces. And all this, for the sake of the good God, a God that no longer, as in the time of Jesus, resides only in Heaven, but now is taught to be Omnipresent. The Christian religion, therefore, is not the same as preached by Jesus. They nevertheless call him their Saviour, their dear Lord, and represent him as an ideal of nobleness and sanctity ; and why ? Because Jesus giving precepts impossible for any human being to follow, took the appearance upon him as if he fully acted up to them himself. This astonished the good people clear out of their senses, and they stood in awe, for the world judges from appearance, and will be imposed upon by appearance, and by its dealers the hypocrites.

CHAPTER VI.—Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them ; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father, which is in Heaven (v. 1.) —Jesus accordingly desires that Ye should only assist your fellow men in view of reward ; he would have given proof of more nobleness of character however, if he had recommended disinterestedness.—“ Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand does.”—This is greatly exaggerated talking, and therefore not exactly wise.

He further instructs his followers in prayer : that the name be hallowed of the Father that is in Heaven.—Jesus probably remembered that his father proper was the Holy Ghost, and that God the Lord had only called him his son on the occasion of his baptism ; he now reciprocated this courtesy by giving the Lord the name of Father, but perhaps he felt not sure that he would be satisfied with the name, and therefore enjoins upon his followers to pray that that name may be hallowed !—The second request “ thy kingdom come,” no doubt alludes to that kingdom of heaven on earth as foretold by the prophets.—More than 18 centuries have passed away since this prayer was ordered by the son of the Lord and it has not come yet, notwithstanding it has often been prayed ; wherefore it is undeniable that it was not right in him to let his simple followers pray for something that would not be realized during all their life time ; for thus he disappointed them with vain expectations.—He further says : “ Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”—This was a strange request, for if the God of heaven could make his will obeyed on earth, he would undoubtedly have done so ; this request consequently was quite superfluous.—Equally so was

the prayer of "Give us this day our daily bread,"—for prayer alone achieves nothing ; the best and only way is to procure it by labor ; heaven does not furnish it gratuitously.—The next request is forgiveness for trespasses as they would forgive those who trespassed against them.—It may be doubted if all followers of Jesus forgave those who trespassed against them, as it is not exactly in human nature always to do so ; at least the Christians of later days must have been guilty of many an untruth in saying this prayer ; and the Saint Lord Jesus himself did not act up to it either, for he did not forgive those that trespassed against him, even ordering their destruction by hell-fire (vide chapter XI. 20–24), simply for declining to believe in his might. — He also enjoins upon his followers to request the Father not to lead them into temptation—as if the great Father could employ himself at leading people into temptation ; this was a sacriligious thought ; for was it not the work of Satan and how could Jesus suppose, that the Lord would do Satan's business ?—Jesus closes his brief and energetic prayer with some flattering appellations to the Lord ; giving him the kingdom, power and glory forever.—This flattery may have been acceptable to the Lord, though not giving him his due ; but what matters this, if they only had the desired effect of securing a hearing for the prayer. The kingdom he said was belonging to the Father, but this was not the case since it never had existence, neither was the Power to him, as it does not appear that he could enforce his will on earth by obliging man to be good ; and least of all was to him the Glory for ever, whereas the Son, and the Holy Ghost and in the Roman church also the Holy Virgin (called God's mother) have well nigh deprived him of all the glory.

Jesus further exhorts his followers not to fast that men may see it, but to do it privately, avoiding a sad countenance, lest they should miss the reward of the Father (v. 16–18).—This doctrine to fast in secret may be beautiful, but to expect a reward, is strange, for what satisfaction can it afford to God, to see people fasting ; this supposition truly heathenish, is in downright contradiction with an enlightened idea of a Supreme being, that made man with a body requiring nourishment, and hence can find no pleasure in seeing them in want of it. Yet common sense would seem to teach us, that that Being is too infinitely great to be pleased with such a puerile mode of showing devotion, and that such supposition can only originate in a very narrow mind.—Jesus then enjoins not to lay up treasures upon earth, where moth and dust doth corrupt, but to lay up treasures for heaven as not subject to corruption.—This command may contain religion of a very superior order, but Jesus might have known, that if proper care be not taken in providing against the wants in this world, destitution, and beggary are sure to follow, and people that are destitute not only do not feel happy for themselves, but are a drag on society, and apprehension of starvation would still at the end compel them to work for earthly compensation ; the saying of laying up treasures for heaven is thus more hallow sounding than full sensed ; and moreover no proof is given where or what those treasures are ; it is like making a present of a gold mine in a land that has yet to be discovered. Humanity is instinc-

tively convinced of this, also christians, notwithstanding their religious belief, have always given the preference to that sort of treasures which the moth and dust doth corrupt, (but of which some may be left for their children,) instead to the treasures in that unknown land called heaven, undiscoverable to eye and telescope.

Jesus thereupon informs his audience, that the light of the body is the eye, "if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?" (v. 22, 23.)—This reads like sheer nonsense, his question as to how great is that darkness, is even so dark, that one would suppose that his light at that moment was not of the brightest.—The audience which may be supposed to have been rather mistified by this time, is then informed that no man can serve two masters (v. 24.)—Experience nevertheless has fully shown that this is not so: in evidence may it serve that the christians serve two masters with great success, namely Lord God Almighty and Lord Jesus Christ, and as distinctly stated in (v. 11) the preceding chapter, it was Jesus express desire that his followers should serve him, and also the Lord; accordingly two masters; this is only a slight inconsistency, of course.—"Therefore," said Jesus, (as if it had reference to what just preceded), "take no thought for your life what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on, is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment," (v. 25).—Taking no thought for providing the commonest necessities has no sense about it, for what would become of society if such doctrines were followed; this is preaching sloth and idleness and the evil thereof. Man is decidedly compelled to take good care of his body; experience has fully proved, that cleanliness and comfort are powerful agents for morality, and that a want of both blunts the delicacy of feeling, and hence is unfavorable to progress in civilization; his question moreover, if the life and body were not more than food and raiment is monstrously out of place, for a body without food is not worth anything as soon ceasing to be an animated body; and likewise without raiment man can not live. These necessities are inseparable of man, though their exact value cannot well be given, as depending upon circumstances. People will often risk their lives to obtain food, thereby showing, that food is of equal value to them as their life. It is thus plain that Jesus by a dexterous twist of his question, intended to deceive his unthinking audience.—In support of his saying to take no thought of food and raiment, he points out, that the fowls of the air are fed, though they do not sow nor reap, and the lilies of the field that do not spin nor toil, are yet more magnificently clothed than even Solomon in all his glory (v. 26.)—This may be poetry but can boast of no substance, for what may be said of a bird and a plant is not applicable to human beings, whose requirements for sustenance are widely different; Jesus might with equal justice have recommended to his followers to live on water because some fishes and plants manage to thrive on such diet, or he might have ordered them to live on the bottom of the sea, because the fishes do so, and man is more than a fish! If Providence

provided no raiment, nor prepared food for man as for the birds and the lilies. it gave him instead superior intelligence so as to enable him to procure those things and prepare them for his use. Besides, the birds and the lilies only flourish in countries which are their original native country, according whose climate they were made, while man, and more particularly the white man, have gradually moved from their native countries into colder climes, where food is only obtained after strenuous exertion and where it is too cold to live without raiment; they could not therefore live according to the precepts of Jesus, but are compelled to work.—This doctrine of Jesus is thus only applicable to the negroes of Central Africa and the inhabitants of other such tropical climes, where trees and soil are furnishing fruit in abundance the whole year round, and where the heat renders clothing not necessary. It is true that Jesus precept has also been followed by the inhabitants of convents, who do not toil for food and garments, but get their necessities supplied by others. Perhaps the Saint Jesus desired to see his teachings in operation in the manner as it is done by those pious folks; but how would it be if the whole world acted so?

Jesus continues and says: "which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (v. 27).—Jesus might as well have said an inch, but his propensity to exaggerate was too strong upon him. (It is a general truth that people who are in the habit of having over forcible notions labor under a diseased imagination, while those that are in sound condition of brain, are less addicted to exaggeration, and enjoy sounder views.)—Once more he preached that one had only to seek the kingdom of God, and its righteousness, and all the necessities of life should be add to you (v. 33).—That Jesus did not preach according to truth, will require no demonstration, every one will feel convinced, and if not, might make the experiment, that meditation on the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, without providing at the same time for the necessities of life, would soon lead to privation; not to mention the danger to be compelled to undertake the journey to the desirable celestial kingdom much more sooner than contemplated or desired.

From all this again it is evident, that what passes for the christian religion now a days, is not exactly as Jesus taught. His teachings if followed would soon bring about a total revolution in society; those who have money would have to part with it for the support of idlers; and no man would feel obliged to work, for others would enjoy the benefit of it. Rich and poor would soon be altogether driven to destitution if all people were honest in following the doctrine; but whereas they would not, society would soon be at the mercy of a number of scoundrels, imposing upon the passions or weakness of the many. That the Christian religion in its commencement was more in accordance to the teachings of Jesus is generally credited; the barbarousness of the middle ages, the destruction of the ancient civilization, and the power of the roguish priests, would go far towards confirming this belief.

The doctrines of Jesus, impartially considered, are much like those which through all ages have met with most favorable reception from the poorer classes, and find their origin in a desire to enjoy comfort and ease by appropriating what belongs to

others Ancient and modern history furnish abundant evidences of the trouble engendered by similar doctrines ; Jesus however knew to put forth his ideas under the cloak of religion. The teachings of Communism and Socialism, as understood by ignorant friends of these enticing chimeras, bears a striking analogy to the teachings propounded by this ingenious son of the Lord.

CHAPTER VII.—Jesus said : “ Judge not, that ye be not judged.”—This, though undeniably a fair precept, is spoken in very undefined a sense, and in that way would give too much scope to criminals ; it is only by judging them, and having the laws maintained, that society is secure.—“ Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,” continues Jesus, “ neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you.”—There may be truth at the bottom of this, but the supposition of giving pearls to the swine is very exaggerated again, and that the swine should turn and rend you, reads entirely like the raving of a diseased imagination.—He further says : “ ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you ” etc., (v. 7-11).—This is certainly very encouraging, but it would not be safe to put faith in this assurance ; for it is doubtful, whether God could give all that is asked of him ; it is much better to endeavor to procure by honest labor what is required, and not trust too much to prayer. The Lord seems to be of opinion, that by granting all that is asked of him, people would soon be given to habits of idleness ; how it may be, at all events it is certain that very little notice is taken of the prayers sent up to him ; experience teaches this to man.—“ Wherefore,” continues Jesus, “ all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you ; do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.”—This teaching in itself is not to be despised if only not considered to be indiscriminately applied, for what is desirable for one person is not always acceptable to another ; in which case it requires more judgment than may be expected in one poor in spirit. We would furthermore observe that the law and the prophets are no sound authority in this case, for the Mosaical laws teach the serving of the God Jehovah, the keeping of many Sabbath- or holy-days, and the offering of many offerings, but touching the love of man to his fellow man, they teach but very little ; they seem to have considered this as of secondary importance ; even the law prescribed to hate all foreign nations, to murder and to plunder them, not considering them as fellow-men. The prophets also taught love to fellow-men in a very partial manner ; they did very little else but cursing and throwing out prophecies of endless horrors against the children of Israel and all their neighbours.—Now Jesus warns his audience against the broad-way that leadeth to destruction, for many go in thereat, but few are those that go the narrow way and enter in at the straight gate (v. 13, 14).—Only few may accordingly be expected to reach the unknown but blissful spot called heaven or paradise. We shall have occasion to show later that according to Jesus there exists in addition to the desirable celestial kingdom on earth, a paradise and a hell, to either of which places the souls of the dead depart as soon as set free, to be either in great bliss

or in great misery for all time to come. And seeing now that most people go the way ending in hell, it follows, that according to the Christian doctrine most people are born to suffer eternal punishment for the short time spent on this world. All those whose sense of right and human feelings are not yet entirely corrupted by false religious teachings, will acknowledge that this statement is surpassingly monstrous, and that in order to put it into execution, a God would be required of such unmitigated cruelty, as the human mind could scarcely conceive. We therefore think it unnecessary to point out the fallacy of this statement of Jesus, presuming, that the spirit of enlightenment in the 19th century is sufficiently developed to admit its impossibility.

Jesus further exhorts the people to beware of the false prophets.—As we have shown in treating on the prophets, they all said the same thing, though it would scarcely be possible for any man to prophesy more falsely than they did themselves; Judea was crowded with such prophets, each pretending to be a true one. Jesus also began as a prophet; true that he afterwards was called the son of God and thereby lost his title of prophet, but to be prophet was nevertheless his original occupation, and he therefore shared in the principal quality of all other prophets that of envy to his rivals. Envy can only originate in a consciousness of inferiority, or distrust in one's own power; the real consciousness of being superior to others, places people above it, and make them indifferent to envy. Whether Jesus possessed the consciousness of superiority over false prophets is not mentioned.—Jesus spoke further with great boldness of the manner, in which he would exclude from heaven those, who had not lived according the will of the Lord Father, he should do that simply by saying: "I never knew you, depart from me."—It must, of course, be exceedingly mortifying to a soul to be thus summarily dealt with; death stripped him of everything, even of his body, what must now become of such a poor soul, standing there outside, naked and bare without any shelter. Oh that poor soul! In this dilemma he jumps into hell! Now reader the only way to avoid such a fate is to seek the affection of the God's son Jesus, that he might not say to you, in such critic moment, "depart from me." Of course this advice is only addressed to those whose imagination portrays them a heaven with doors where a soul has to knock to gain admittance. If the representation may be heathenish, this does not matter, as long as it serves some purpose. And this, no doubt, it does, according those people, who pretend that the masses should be kept in superstition, that they themselves might reign supreme.—In illustration of his statement Jesus compared the observer of his precepts to a wise man and he who did not observe them, to an unwise man, who built his house on sand.—It is remarkable that while Christians exclude from heaven all those whose religious creed differs from theirs, they will be excluded from heaven themselves too, whereas not one of them can boast of a strict observance of Jesus' precepts; therefore we can not expect to find in heaven either wise or unwise folks.—And the people, were astonished at Jesus' doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.—That the people should be astonished is not surprising

for they had heard Jesus talking such very extravagant things as to make people wonder how they could ever originate in human brains. His speaking with authority simply consisted in the statement that he could admit souls into heaven, or not, just as he pleased; no prophet or scribe ever had the boldness to assume such authority, which shows, that Jesus understood the arts of the prophets (the arts of humbugging) much better than Moses and all the prophets who succeeded him. From this point of view we admit that Jesus was a great man, admirably so!

CHAPTER VIII.—When Jesus came down from the mountain followed by multitudes, a leper came to him requesting that Jesus would make him clean. Jesus put forth his hand and touched him and immediately his leprosy was cleansed.—This surely was a miracle, somewhat like that performed by Moses, though superior to it. Moses put his hand in his bosom and it came out leprous; when he put it in again it was healed. Of Moses it could be suspected that he had hid a quantity of flour in his bosom, or something else, wherewith he could make his hand white; but the miracle of Jesus must of course be free from such suspicion, for he was the son of God; some though may think, that through some skilful slight of hand this miracle could be equalled if not surpassed by many a magician; but leave them alone!—Surprising was the order Jesus gave to the healed man not to speak of the miracle to any one, though it was performed while Jesus was followed by multitudes; the man was only allowed to show himself to the priests.—The great humility of Jesus is surprising; for the same secrecy must have been expected from the multitudes who witnessed it.—Then came a centurion to Jesus, requesting him to heal his servant who was sick of the palsy; Jesus intended to visit the patient but the Centurion in great humility stated, that it would be enough if Jesus would order his servant to be healed. Jesus was struck with the faith of this man, and he said, "Go thy way and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." And the servant was healed the self same hour.—This was a remarkable proof of the divine power of healing of Jesus. It is to be deplored, though, that no one among the multitudes did see the healed servant, as there was no proof therefore that the servant did exist at all; they may also have doubted on the ground, that a Centurion of those times did not think enough of his men to place himself in exhibition as believer in miracles on one's account; other centurions would have contented themselves to send for a quack to come to see the patient; it could, for this reason, be suspected that Jesus had a secret understanding with the centurion on the subject; but no good Christian will suspect this, as he would be no good Christian if he did.—Jesus then went to the house of Peter where he found his wife's mother sick of fever and he touched her hand and the fever left her.—Surprising freaks the imagination will play sometimes; even if the woman was not in the secret, it is still possible, that she was healed, without this fact proving in the least, that Jesus was a son of the Lord.—In the evening Jesus healed a great many people who were possessed of the devil.—How strange that in a small place like Capernaum so many people

could have been found possessed of the devil, while in later times this malady may be said to have had no existence in any part of the world; perhaps the Lord may have sent it among the people of Capernaum, so as to afford his beloved son an opportunity to display his great powers. The malady, they say, principally consisted in the patient making hideous faces and gesticulations as the devil is supposed to do. Jesus only said the words "go out devil" and the patient at once became himself again. We regret that such cases never came under our observation as to be able to appreciate the greatness of the miracle.—All these performances according to Matthew were in fulfilment of the words of Isaiah: "He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses" (Jes. LIII: 4).—Matthew seems to be under the impression that the benevolent Jesus took all the diseases upon himself; if he did, the diseases can not have been very serious, as it is evident from his whole history that Jesus was throughout in the enjoyment of pretty good health. Occasionally, it is true, he appears to be somewhat excited, and confused in his preachings, and this may have been in consequence of the great many devils he took upon himself, for such companions residing in the brains, must undoubtedly have caused considerable trouble therein. We must, however, confess not to share the opinion of Matthew in this respect, for the prophecy of Isaiah above mentioned refers to something else, as we showed in our comment upon it.—When now Jesus saw the great multitudes about him, he gave order to depart to the other side (v. 18).—Jesus was accordingly followed by great multitudes; the man that took diseases upon him, spoken of in Jes. LIII, was on the contrary shunned by men. A clear proof that Matthew was wrong to suppose that man to be Jesus.—And a certain Scribe then came, saying: "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," but Jesus answered, "the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."—This shows undeniably how much Jesus sacrificed for the good of mankind, not having a place to lay his head; fortunately that 'this Son of man' was not as sick as Matthew imagined, for else that mode of life would not have agreed with him; it may though be supposed that he occasionally availed himself of the hospitality of others, and while in Capernaum, resided at the house of Peter.—Another disciple asked Jesus, to suffer him to bury his father, before following him, but Jesus answered: "follow me and let the dead bury their dead" (v. 22).—How kindly thought Jesus of his fellow-men; after saying in the former Chapter: "whatsoever ye will that men shall do to you do ye even so to them;" and now, would the father of the disciple have wished his son to deny him a burial? And how disrespectful spoke Jesus to this disciple of his dead father; was it in obedience of the command of Moses; "honor thy father and thy mother?" There is indeed not much of the so exalted christian loveliness in those words of Jesus! Fortunately however for christianity, that the Christians never considered them in the light of a command, for had they paid obedience to them and let the dead bury the dead, it would have been preferable not to reside amongst them.

We next find Jesus in a ship at sea, and a great storm arose while he was sleeping; and the disciples awoke him, saying: "Lord save us, we

perish" Jesus then getting up rebuked the wind and the waves, and there was a great calm.—This was, to be sure, a very miraculous performance, the more so, as wind depends upon many causes, originating often in distant and different parts of the globe, and it would be deemed impossible to control the wind without removing them; it was therefore very clever in Jesus that he knew at once whence that wind proceeded, and could bring his wondrous powers to bear as quick upon those diverge causes. It is also wonderful that the sea calmed down at once, for usually after the storm subsides, it will take several hours, say a whole day, for the waves to settle. But the power of Jesus appears to have been such as fully to annihilate all the laws of nature; he truly inspires awe, the more, as it is doubtful whether Providence itself has the power to do as much. We also greatly regret that we cannot fully participate in the admiration of this miracle, which non-admiration has its source in the disenchanting idea that suggested itself to us, that not Jesus, but Matthew himself must have been sleeping during the storm, and that this pious man must have dreamt the story, which he now relates for general edification.—When Jesus arrived on the other side of the waters, he saw two men, coming out of the tombs, who were possessed of the devil, and they said: "Jesus, thou Son of God, art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" and the devils besought him, saying: "If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine." That herd was near by; Jesus now said to them; "Go," and the devils came out and went into the herd of swine; and behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters (v. 32).—This story is wonderful, indeed, and of course, therefore, very edifying, and entertaining besides; we hear of live people coming out of tombs, devils going into swine, and drowning themselves with all the swine together; we do not hear of such things in the present time. And how remarkable that those persons possessed of the devil, when meeting Jesus, should know at once his name and title; the name of the Lord was in it, no doubt! A pity it is, nevertheless, that so many devilized of swine had to be drowned by the performance of this miracle, for they would have furnished food to many other poor devils (Samaritans; as Jews eat no swine flesh). Jesus could also have no right to dispose of them; the more not, if he wished other people to do unto him as he did to them; we trust, however, that Jesus could not help that those swine ran into the water, and firmly believe they were scared into it by seeing the terrible gesticulations and hearing the fearful howlings of those two devil-possessed men of the tombs.

CHAPTER IX.—Jesus went again into the ship and returned to his city, and they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed, Jesus seeing their faith, said: "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;" and certain Scribes said within themselves: "this man blasphemeth;" whereupon Jesus asked them: "wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? which is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee, or arise and walk;" and in order to prove them his power, Jesus ordered the man with the palsy to arise, to take up his bed and to

go home; which he instantly did.—This certainly was a most miraculous performance; no proof, however, is furnished that the sick man was unable to walk before the performance, but as it is related by Matthew, and as Matthew is called by the Christians Saint Matthew, it must be believed without further information. The question of Jesus what was easier, to forgive the sins, or to say to the man ‘arise,’ shows that in his opinion the former was the easiest. As a cure, however, may be brought on by medical means, while the forgiveness of sins can only depend on God, we are led to suppose that Jesus was mistaken. It is easy enough, to be sure, to say: “thy sins be forgiven thee,” but to do it, is a much more difficult task; much more so than even the removal of palsy. The question of Jesus, therefore, betrayed rather a human, than a divine understanding in this matter.—Matthew further informs us, that as Jesus sat at table, in his house, with publicans and sinners (in the original version there is said, harlots), the Pharisees made the remark of its being improper to be in such society, but Jesus answered, that they that are whole need no physician, but they that are sick.—Jesus accordingly seems to have thought that by eating with bad people he might convert them; it is true that most of his preachings, as the giving of the coat and cloak, and the lending of money, must extremely have pleased those folks; it remains in doubt, however, if on that score they allowed themselves to be converted to the belief that he was the Son of God or of the Holy Ghost. Yet, there must have been in those days a great many people more who were unbelievers in his high descent, and it would, therefore, have been much more proper in Jesus if he had kept in more respectable society, commencing with converting them. Matthew may have been an agreeable host, and the publicans jolly fellows, and the female sinners pleasant acquaintances, still, it was not proper in the Son of God, if he would lecture to other people on morality, to keep in such society. If the Pharisees questioned its propriety, cannot be blamed in them.

The disciples of John came once upon a day to Jesus, asking: “why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, and thy disciples fast not;” but Jesus answered: “Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?”—This sounds much like an evasion, by answering with a question without stating a reason. The disciples of John might also have remarked to Jesus, that he did not follow the laws of Moses, by not fasting, and therefore was guilty of falsehood in his preaching (of Matthew V: 17), where he said he was not come to destroy the law. If Jesus had simply stated that he preferred feasting in jolly company to fasting, he would have spoken intelligibly; his answer, nevertheless, shows that he was smart in repartee.—After this evasive answer, Jesus at once proceeds to state, that a patch of new cloth should not be put on an old garment, and that new wine should not be put in old bottles.—These may be interesting pieces of information, though they do not answer the question of the disciples of John. It may be asserted that Jesus intended to convey the meaning, that he did not wish to add to the religion as established by

Moses, preferring to get up an entirely new religion ; if this were his intention, he gave proof of weakness of mind by not stating now and before, in a manly, straightforward manner, that he intended to abolish fasting altogether.--While Jesus was speaking, a certain ruler came to him, saying, that his daughter was dead, and if Jesus would only come, he felt sure that life would soon be restored to her. Jesus then arose and followed him, and so did his disciples, and behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood, already of twelve years' standing, came behind him and touched the hem of his garment ; that very moment she was cured at once.—With what wonderful power of healing was Jesus endowed ! One had but to touch him, and like with a charged electrical machine, a strong dose of the invisible fluid was immediately administered. It is to be regretted that he no longer sojourns on earth, what services could he have rendered to the human family in his perambulations ; there would be no need of physicians and their medicines ; only we would request him then, not to take notice of his having been touched, for it would be inconvenient for many patients, especially for bashful ladies, if suffering of some complaints, to explain always their diseases in public. It was very fortunate for the good old woman she was so easily cured ; but how Matthew found it out is not told, neither is stated if the speedy cure was immediately perceptible to the people who were present ; we have thus no proof that the cure actually took place.—“ And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and people making a noise, he said : “ give place, for the maid is not dead but sleepeth,” and they laughed him to scorn ; but when the people were put forth, he went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.—This performance is striking, and shows that Jesus was a most able performer of miracles. Elijah, it is true, also restored a child to life, but he wanted to give himself a great deal of trouble with gesturing, and this was not required with Jesus. As we observed already, when treating on Elijah, it is not difficult for any one who understands mesmerizing to bring a child, or one of weaker constitution than one's self, into a mesmeric state of unconsciousness. The patient is then often as dead to all appearances, and such as are ignorant of the cause might easily believe it the body of a person just dead, and still, he who mesmerized, has only to make the required manual operation, and the patient will be restored to consciousness in but a moment. Even at the present time it would be practicable to pass for a prophet, in some remote district, when performing the said trick while preaching religion, and what guarantee have we that Jesus did not act on the same principle ? The answer may be, that mesmerism was unknown in the time of Jesus ; this is an error, however, as ancient history conclusively shows that the Greek and Egyptian priests were aware of the existence of it, and that in all probability they were even much further advanced in it than the present generation is. Jesus may by some means, or accidentally, have learnt the secret, and even on account of it have conceived the idea of starting as a prophet ; a fisherman, turning field-preacher and miracle-performer, must have been encouraged to do so by something, and who knows if not his new acquirements may have sug-

gested the idea to him. We hope Jesus spoke the truth when he said : " the maid only sleepeth," for a son of God will tell no lies. But why did he say it while it was not required to say so ? Jesus must have understood that those of the bystanders who did not believe in the miracle could have nothing to remark now, while those who did believe, would do so nevertheless, and perhaps even more, by attributing his words to humility. We, though, do not think that the all-powerful Son of God had occasion to have so much humility that it would be necessary for him to resort to falsehood ; we also believe therefore Jesus spoke the truth in affirming that the maid was not dead.—Jesus performed more miracles on that same day ; he healed a blind man in the street in the presence of a large multitude, ordering the blind man not to say a word about it ; the pious man however, went from there and told everybody of his case ; he was thus as secret about it as Saint Matthew himself, who put it in his book that everybody should read it.—Jesus furthermore healed dumb men, who, by his command and without the slightest surgical operation, recovered their speech immediately. It is true that we have not the slightest proofs that these people were actually dumb and blind ; for these evils are easily counterfeited ; but we nevertheless admire the piety of those men, who, by allowing themselves to be healed in public, in the presence of large multitudes, and by returning thanks clamorously, have so greatly contributed to confirm the soul-saving faith in the Lord Jesus, the fisherman of the lake of Genesareth, the son of God, the prophet of the kingdom of heaven on earth, and the healer of sickness and diseases among the rabble of Galilee.

CHAPTER X.—Jesus called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power to cast out unclean spirits, and to heal all sorts of sickness and disease.—It was indeed very kind in Jesus not to keep his rare talents all to himself, but to communicate them to others ; the world would thus at once be benefitted by having physicians who would heal all sickness and diseases without loss of time and without medicine ; unfortunately, though, the disciples were not so kind as he, and appear to have come to an understanding to keep the secret, and not even to impart it to their children ; for since the death of those disciples this precious art seems to have gone in the grave with them, as we never hear of real miraculous cure ever since.—Matthew gives us furthermore the names of the twelve disciples. We notice among them the name of Judas Iscariot ; this was the one who afterwards betrayed Jesus. which would not tend to prove that the wonderful secret art in which he was now instructed by his master, has made much impression upon him, or has inspired him with profound respect for the Son of God.—The twelve disciples possessing the requisite knowledge, were sent forth to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand ; they were not to go among the Gentiles, however.—It is evident that in the commencement Jesus had no idea to have his doctrines preached, except among the Jews. — The preaching among the Gentiles was first resorted to at a later period (probably after making a successful experiment), wherefore the assertion of the Christians that Jesus came into the world for the benefit of all the nations, provided they do believe in

him, is not confirmed, for in that case he would have ordered, from the commencement, that his kingdom was to be announced to all nations.—The disciples were to take no gold, silver, nor brass with them. And when they came into a city or town, they were to inquire who in it was worthy, and there they should abide until they went away (that is, abide as long as they pleased), and if they were not well received, they should go, shaking the dust off their feet at the door; and such city would fare harder in the day of judgment than even Sodom or Gomorrah.—This was a striking proof of the forgiveness in the meek Lord Jesus. And that, after teaching to treat another as one would wish to be treated by him, and after teaching that the meek and the peacemakers were blessed; here now is to be seen how the teaching was to be put in practice. They were to live on the expenses of others, and if they were refused entrance in a house, or a city, (which could happen occasionally) for not everybody could be willing to take in uninvited and unknown guests, without money or baggage), then such house or city would meet with harder fate than even Sodom and Gomorrah. Who will not acknowledge that this was acting eminently fair? fortunately, though, for the cities and families who declined the visits of the disciples, wonder-performers, that they never experienced anything like the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah.—Matthew further informs us that Jesus warned his disciples against men who would scourge them in the synagogues and deliver them up to governors and kings; yet, they would speak without difficulty, for the Spirit of their Father would be with them.—One will perhaps be astonished that Jesus knew beforehand that some of his disciples should be scourged; still a great stretch of sagacity was not required to foresee that some would get into trouble; for several of them, as we shall see hereafter, were people without knowledge of the world and excited enthusiasts, who, without considering time or place, would announce the coming of a new king. Those in authority could then scarcely do otherwise than to have them apprehended as disturbers of the peace, and punished accordingly. The Son of God did, in this way, send his simpletons of disciples, wilfully, in all sorts of risks and dangers; his object, which originally was to be a great prophet, seems to have been modified by his ambition to make himself king of the Jews (that is, king of a heavenly kingdom in Jerusalem), and this was a much more dangerous enterprise. . . . As for the facility of speaking in the spirit of the Father, no proofs are furnished the disciples ever did it; yet that they may have spoken the dullest things in full confidence and emphasis, is very possible, because fanaticism is a powerful agent in fostering self-confidence and vaingloriousness. (In our opinion, most of the disciples were fanatics, honestly believing that the heavenly kingdom on earth, foretold by the prophets, was near; while a few in the confidence of Jesus, must have known what sort of a kingdom he was trying to establish. This opinion is founded on a general review of the New-Testament).—As for the consequences of what Jesus was about to do, we read: “And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child, and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to

death" (v. 21).—We may be truly thankful that the heavenly kingdom on earth never succeeded in perverting human nature to the degree as Jesus thought it would, would ; it is true there are many horrible instances of what fanaticism has led to, but the family ties were fortunately never so outraged as the father delivering up his child, or the child his parents to death for the sake of Jesus ; he was therefore mistaken in his expectations.—Jesus further foretold his disciples that they would not have gone through the cities of Israel or the Son of Man would have come to his kingdom (v. 23).—He sent out, as we saw, twelve disciples, who are supposed to have been rather active in preaching the new kingdom ; and the cities in Israel were few in number, consequently, they must have visited them all, or nearly all, and yet the Son of Man did not come on David's throne. Thus the Son of Man spoke a falsehood ; and seeing that such is not fair in a Son of God, it may be he called himself therefore a Son of Man.—After this untrue prophecy, Jesus indulges in a fit of eloquence, touching the relation of master and servant, contending that it was enough for the servant to be like his master ; and if the master of the house (Jesus) was called Beelzebub, the disciples should be satisfied to be called the same, or worse (v. 25).—This was in explanation of the degree of equality his disciples should attain ; yet, to be also Sons of God or Messiahs, was of course out of the question. Jesus then exhorts his disciples to entertain no fear of those that kill the body, and are unable to kill the soul, but to fear those who can destroy both body and soul to hell (v. 28).—The Son of Man appears to us to be laboring here under a slight mistake, for though we will not decide whether a soul can be destroyed in hell, we may take it for granted that no human body will meet with destruction there, and that for the simple reason that matter does not leave the earth, and that hell is not to be found on this globe, at least not the hell-fire of Jesus. That Jesus made this mistake may be excused in him, since sons of men are fallible ; yet he may only have spoken to make a better impression upon his auditors, who may less have cared whether their soul should be burnt, provided the body was not !—Jesus further advises his audience to confess him before men ; for whosoever would deny him, he would be denied before the Father (v. 33).—We perceive by this that God the Father knows nothing about people, and applies to the Son for information before he disposes of a soul, by sending it either to heaven or to hell. The Son accordingly has much more power than the Father. It is to be regretted that such a powerful personage was so extremely vain as to require expressly that he should be publicly confessed. It was not sufficient to be simply acknowledged ; no, the Lord Jesus required this confession to be public ; if the people might be punished for it by kings and governors, was of no account, if only the world witnessed the large number of Jesus' followers. The larger the number of his followers, the easier would Jesus, the Messiah, succeed in making his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and succeed in becoming king of the Jews. —Then again contemplating the difficulties in store for him, Jesus went on to say : "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth ; I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against

his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, (v. 34-35). And he that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (v. 37).—The sweetness and meekness of the christian religion, of which the Christians boast so much, show to great advantage in these words. The Mosaical religion with all her partiality and mistaken sense of justice, at least taught "love thy neighbour (that is thy fellow-Israelite,) and honor thy father and thy mother;" but the meek Jesus did not think this necessary; love for him should take precedence over all other affections, no sacrifice should be too great, the voice of nature itself should be stifled. What a splendid proof of the humility of the lord Jesus; and how did he love humanity, and how blissful were his new doctrines! Unbelievers may assert that such teachings are horrible, that even among the most barbarous nations no such notions were ever found, but such people are in error, of course, because they do not understand it. Such things should be read, with faith in the Lord, and it will then be conceived in what the soul-saving worship of the lord Jesus Christ consists. It consists in hating the world entirely, but to love Jesus, and that by confessing him publicly, and by being constantly in meekness, threatening every body with the day of judgment and hell-fire, without fear of those, who can only destroy the body, but are unable to destroy the soul; and rather to take up the sword against parents and children, brothers and sisters, than to be wavering in the least in the faith of that sacred religion. How blissful the faith in Jesus! How happy and contented one must feel to follow those glorious precepts! And you unbelievers! confess yourselves to that faith, and you will enjoy what you never enjoyed before: You will revel in the blissful knowledge that the kingdom of Christ is opened unto you, while for all other beings the gates of hell are opened wide! Oh! Listen to these words! so shall you, when grown a believer poor in spirit, inherit a crown of pure gold in the kingdom of heaven, more precious than all precious stones, and greater in value than all the ornaments of earthly vanity!

What follows in this Chapter contains some useful teachings remarkable for clearness, as:

"He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. (v. 39.)

"He that receiveth a disciple receiveth me (Jesus,) and he that receiveth me (Jesus) receiveth him that sent me. (v. 40.)

"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward &c. (v. 41.)

"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward. (v. 42.)

CHAPTER XI.—When Jesus had made an end of ordering his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and preach in the cities. John was still in prison, and when he heard of the works of *Christ*, he sent two of his disciples to

ask "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"—By what authority Matthew calls Jesus by the name of 'Christ' is not explained; it has nevertheless been used ever since.—Jesus answered the disciples of John: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."—This answer was brief and solid, though not exactly could it serve to prove that not another Christ would make his appearance, who might have performed still greater miracles. We may suspect therefore that the answer was less calculated to convince the disciples of John, than to let John know, what the nature of the miracles, and of the preached gospel was. From this, John should easily perceive that the notorious prophet was no one else than his cousin and friend Jesus of Nazareth, with whose project to erect a priestly kingdom, he, without doubt, was acquainted. As John was in prison, and the land of the Jews always full of prophets, his inquiry was, of course, in order to ascertain, through his disciples, if the notorious prophet was his friend or some one else.—When those disciples had left, the eloquent Jesus addressed the multitudes as follows: "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken by the wind? But what went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses. But what went ye out for to see? a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet: For this is he, of whom it is written: Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (v. 7-11).—It is evident from this address again, that, though Jesus may have been a talented preacher for the poor people of the streets, he constantly contradicted himself; for instance, while stating that John the Baptist is more than a prophet, yea a messenger of the Lord, who came to prepare the way for the Lord, and that of all men born of women John the Baptist is the greatest, (consequently even greater than Jesus himself, the son of Mary) he afterwards says that he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than John. Verily, it is scarcely possible to put more nonsense in as few words, but, considering that is the son of God who spoke, it may be thought as overflowing with wisdom. It has, for the rest, never appeared that John prepared any way; for scarcely had he commenced to act as prophet when Herod had him locked up. His being locked up, may perhaps have been the reason why Jesus was of opinion that he that should be the least in the kingdom of heaven would be more than John, for he understood no doubt, that as soon as Herod heard of the mob proclaiming a heavenly kingdom on earth, he might have John beheaded at once, as one of the conspirators, so that John would at the end be less than the least in that new kingdom.—Jesus goes on to say: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (v. 12).—According to this the violent would be more powerful than the God of heaven. The violent desig

ated by Jesus were probably Herod and his men, who, by having John locked up had prevented the rabble from proclaiming the kingdom of heaven.—“And if ye will receive it, Jesus says, this is Elias which was to come” (v. 14).—This refers to the prophecy of Malachi IV : 5; but we perceive there that Elijah was to come a short time before the day of wrath of the Lord; the day burning as an oven, when Jehovah would come down himself from heaven to treat the wicked by fire; but, since this remarkable day never came, the prophecy of Elijah could not apply to John by any means; and to pretend such would be a too plain deception.—Jesus further states in his address that it was said of John, ‘he hath the devil,’ and of himself was said, he was gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, (v. 19).—The cause of this calumnies was, no doubt, with John on account of his eccentricities, which must have appeared to many like the acts of one possessed of the devil. And with Jesus, on account of his frequenting company of sinners; if he had kept himself throughout in respectable society, he would have avoided the reproach that he was a wine-bibber, &c. Jesus was however in some sense a friend of publicans, for Matthew himself was one and Jesus attended his dinner parties (vide Chapter IX : 9, 10.) Publicans were held by the Jews in as much contempt as thieves and pick-pockets; they were receivers or collectors of taxes, but invariably managed to have a percentage come into their own pockets. And for sinners, may be found in the original version female-sinners or prostitutes; the translators of the Bible have however thought proper to slightly modify this expression. It would also be too bad to say of saint Jesus that he was a friend of prostitutes; it is true that Mary Magdalen, who accompanied him every-where, had been one, but of her it is said that she was converted, and this accusation concerning Jesus can therefore have no foundation.

Jesus then visited the cities where he had been before, and commenced to cry woe over them, and ill-fated prophecies; somewhat in the manner as Jeremiah and other woe-prophetisers had done before him, “Woe unto thee Chorazim! Woe unto thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you: it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.”—It was very fortunate for Chorazim and Bethsaida that that terrible day of judgment has never come, and that they have been allowed to fall into decay in the most natural way. It was nevertheless not very charitable in Jesus to foster revenge against those cities; for, in the first place, their principal sin, (that they would not believe in his miracles, was probably because they had seen similar performances by other prophets.) and on that account had lost their faith in them; and in the second place, the day of judgment burning the inhabitants with fire, would have punished many innocent child not responsible for the unbelief of its parents.—Jesus continues: “And thou Capernaum which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell, for if the mighty works that have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto thee, It

shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom than for thee." (v. 23 and 24).—The sense of justice of Jesus was admirable; he was indeed a worthy son of his sire. Because the inhabitants of Capernaum had not believed in his miracle-performings, and paid no attention to his eccentric street-preaching, they would be punished more severely than a people, that according to the story had been guilty of the grossest and most detestable of crimes. It needs no comment that this judgment is as absurd as any which preceded; also it is not surprising, if those who heard him talk in this manner believed him to be a wine-bibber. —After thus venting his indignation he thanked the Father, because he had hid those things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes.—The babes were those people that followed Jesus, and as he constantly preached in the streets and in favor of the poor, it may be presumed that not the choicest portion of the nation followed him, but principally beggars and vagabonds; they then were the babes, alluded to by Jesus, who had the good fortune to have those things revealed to them (but what things it were Matthew forgets to mention). —He further informs his audience that all things were delivered to him by the Father; no man knew the Son but the Father; neither knew any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son would reveal him.—It was truly generous of the Father to deliver up all things to the Son; the Son however little knew to take advantage of that great power, for he never succeeded in establishing his heavenly kingdom on earth, and even when he at last declared himself a king, he was crucified for causing sedition. And what regards Jesus' power of revealing the Father to whomsoever he chose, of this also he never gave proof, since even the most devout Christian never saw the Father; who seems to prefer to conceal himself persistently.—Jesus concludes by saying to the people: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly." (v. 29).—Jesus just now asserted that the Father had delivered up all things to him, and that he alone knew the Father and the Father him, this was very likely 'lowly;' and what preceded, that those who loved their father and mother more than him, were not worthy of him, this showed probably his meekness. And his woe-cryings and cursings of this chapter prove also his meek feelings!—"And ye shall find rest unto your souls," he says, "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (v. 29-30).—He said 'his probably to add strength to his doctrine of the preceding chapter: "I did not come to bring peace but the sword. I did come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household."—The son of man shared indeed largely in the general weakness brought upon him by his half human nature, namely of being vain and presumptuous, and seeing a mote in the eye of another, without noticing the beam in his own.

CHAPTER XII.—At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath-day through the corn, and his disciples were hungered and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it (it would appear as if the Pharisees fol-

lowed him wherever he went), they said unto him : behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-day ; but Jesus answered that David once ate the shew-bread, which was also not lawful, and that the priests profaned the Sabbath.—The great son of man must have been of the opinion that what is sin in one was an excuse for another, which was strong reasoning for so wise a person.—He then went into their synagogue, where he saw a man whose hand was withered ; the Pharisees asked him if it was lawful to heal on a Sabbath-day, he answered with a question : If a man had a sheep that fell in a pit on a Sabbath-day, if he would not lift it out ; and adding that a man was more than a sheep, he healed the hand.—Without pretending that sickness should not be attended to on a Sabbath as well as on any other day, we cannot admit the logic of his reasoning, as the cases are not parallel ; the sheep in the pit might get drowned or suffocated, but the man with the withered hand might easily have waited another day. Also, it is not likely that the Pharisees would have objected of saving a man out of a pit on a Sabbath-day, and it is only in that case that his remark, that a man was more than a sheep, would have been correct. A withered hand is something that easily can be counterfeited by using chalk or lime, or some other whitening stuff, and by keeping it motionless. The man with the withered hand may have been one of the publicans and sinners, with whom Jesus was on good terms, for other people knowing it to be unlawful, would probably have hesitated to proffer a request of that sort on a Sabbath.—Then the Pharisees held a council against him, how they might destroy him.—The miracle, therefore, does not seem to have made a *plötz* impression upon the bystanders, even the reverse took place, as the Pharisees seem to have only viewed it as a public desecration of established religious usage.—But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew from thence, and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all, charging them not to make him known.—There must accordingly have been multitudes requiring healing in those days, and it is as reasonable to presume that all these evils had been sent in Palestine for the express purpose of giving Jesus an opportunity to exhibit his wondrous powers of healing. The humility of Jesus in prohibiting the multitudes from making him known, was, according to Matthew, that the prophecy of Isaiah might be fulfilled : “ Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased, etc. ; he shall not strive, nor cry ; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.”—These words, somewhat altered by Matthew, are from Isaiah XLII ; but how Matthew can have the sublime impudence to apply them to Jesus, who was constantly engaged in strife with the Pharisees, and in crying woe over many cities, and in preaching in the streets, is irreconcilable.—Jesus proceeded with his miracles ; the Pharisees pretended that he was in league with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, but Jesus said that in such case Beelzebub would act against himself ; a devil would not cast out devils ; and then he asked, but if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out (v. 27).—This shows by Jesus’ own admission that such miracles as he performed could be performed by Pharisee prophets too ; this art of casting out devils was

therefore not a superhuman one, as many, without this intimation, might fain believe.—Jesus now thinking to have put down the Pharisees with his argument about Beelzebub, drew from it the conclusion, that he cast out devils by the Spirit of God; “how,” said he, “could one come in a strong man’s house, except he first bind the strong man?” Giving to understand by it that Beelzebub was bound by him.—It is true that neither Beeizebub, Satan, Belial, or any other devil does make his appearance now-a-days, which might lead to the belief that Jesus had actually bound them; but perceiving, on the other hand, that crime has not yet disappeared from this world, we may conclude that the same evil spirit of old times is still as active as ever, and that Jesus boasted of a heroism which never came to pass.—Jesus further gave it as his opinion, that he who was not with him was against him, and then spoke: “I say unto you all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men” (v. 31).—It would perhaps be difficult to understand how Jesus, speaking of himself, connected those words, on a sudden, with the punishment he proclaims against those who could utter blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, but we ought to know that great respect for the Holy Ghost would of course imply great respect for him, the son of the Holy Ghost. It is true that his birth was illegitimate, but what did that matter, for no man, from fear of the great punishment, would ever dare to assert that the Holy Ghost was guilty of fornication. . . . His declaration that all manner of sin shall be forgiven, was very merciful; it is not clear, however, why the eternal fire of hell, often mentioned by him, would be kept burning; we must suppose, therefore, that his declaration was incorrect.—The meek Jesus continuing his speech (and, though according to Matthew he never was in strife, and his voice was never heard in the streets, in fulfilment of the prophecy), he addressed the Pharisees as follows: “O generation of vipers! how can ye, being evil, speak good things, etc. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”.—How terribly long must be that day of judgment of the Lord, for it will take some time to judge all the idle words spoken by men; the judging alone of all the idle words spoken by Jesus (for he never wrote) would already take more than one very long day.—After assuring once more that by their words people shall be either justified or condemned, Jesus was addressed by certain Scribes and Pharisees who asked of him to give them a sign.—As Jesus appeared to be of opinion that people shall be judged by their words alone (for of the exercise of their piety he makes here no mention), his religion was eminently fit for hypocrites, and it is consequently not surprising that the Pharisees, in proof of what he advanced, should have required a sign, they being hypocrites themselves.—Jesus, however, declined this reasonable request, saying: “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (v. 40).—The great Son of the Holy Ghost

(who out of lowliness styled himself the Son of Man), was slightly in error in respect of the sign, or rather he uttered a falsehood, for in the first place Jonas was not in the belly of a whale, the throat of a whale being too narrow to admit of swallowing a man; and in the second place, Jesus himself was never three days and three nights in the heart of the earth; he was, according to history, only *one* day and *two* nights in a new grave, in a rock above the ground. The quasi-poetical expression of heart of the earth is thus incorrect; as an excuse, we may bring forth that Matthew, by way of embellishment, may occasionally have used poet's liberty.—Jesus thereupon informs his audience: that the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold, a greater than Jonas was here (v. 41); and the queen of the south, who paid a visit to Solomon, would also rise and condemn the then existing generation, for she listened to Solomon's wisdom, and a greater than Solomon was there (42).—From this it would appear that that generation was not to be forgiven, but punished, which is in downright contradiction with Jesus' statement in v. 31. In either case, it is certain that he spoke idle words, now or before.—While Jesus in this strain preached to the crowd, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Now, one of the audience mentioned this to him, but Jesus answered: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said: "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father, which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (v. 49-50).—Thus closed the sermon; the answer of Jesus, that those who obeyed the Father were his blood-relations, was, however, sheer nonsense, and leads one to suspect that he did not wish to recognize his mother and brothers. It could also not be gratifying to a son of God to own relationship to people of the lower class; besides, it was interfering with Jesus' pretension in Matthew XI: 11, that he was not born of a woman; and then, to be addressed as a son by an ordinary woman, in the presence of multitudes, how unillustrious was that.

CHAPTER XIII.—The same day Jesus went out of the house, and sat by the sea-side, and great multitudes were gathered unto him, so that he went into a ship and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spoke many things unto them in parables, about seed that fell on good ground and seed that fell on stony places; the seed on good ground brought forth fruit, but the seed on stony ground did not.—This well-known parable is generally greatly admired, and said to signify that even as with that seed, so too with the doctrine of Jesus, it would be accepted by some, while by others it would not; but as it teaches nothing more, it is, in our opinion, rather a useless parable.—The disciples apparently did not understand its utility, for they asked why Jesus spoke in parables. Jesus then answered: "because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."—This evidently shows that the

Lord Jesus only told this story to engage the attention of the crowd, without intention to teach it for their benefit. So nursery-stories are told to children to keep them quiet; this same mode of action was of course worthy of the Son of God! for was not his superiority over the people, like the superiority of a nurse over a child? It might, however, have been expected from a son of God, that he would have taught to better purpose. And as for the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom, which Jesus intended to communicate to his disciples, it is to be regretted that the disciples never spoke of those; they remained mysteries for succeeding generations, as much as for the people in the time of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus, thus, kept the people as much in ignorance as he did himself; probably because this is one of the standing principles of this enlightened religion.—In explanation of the foregoing, Jesus added: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (v. 12).—This explanation is perhaps much to the purpose, though it is not clear; but as Jesus intended to keep his knowledge in mystery, so the less clear it was the better. The principles of justice he taught, of giving all to some, and taking everything away from those who had but little, must be imagined to be full of mysterious divine impartiality!

Jesus spoke yet some more parables, in order, he said, that the prophecy of Isaiah should be fulfilled, which saith: "By hearing, ye shall hear and shall not understand," etc. (v. 13).—Consequently, the more unintelligible his reasoning, the better would the prophecy be fulfilled.—One of his parables was, that the kingdom of heaven was like a man, who sowed good seed, but his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.—We would have thought that the kingdom of heaven need not fear the inroads of an enemy, as the Lord of hosts, with his powerful forces, could easily protect it, and also that the kingdom of heaven could not appropriately be likened to a man; this comparison would even seem incongruous, but as it is not probable that a son of the Most High should talk nonsense, we have to take it for granted that his words are replete with wisdom. It may, nevertheless, be noticed, that Jesus was deficient in consistency, for in the first part of this tale it is the man who sows, and in the latter part the field on which he sows that is likened to the kingdom of heaven; which renders the comparison somewhat confused.—We are further informed that the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hid in a field, which a man finds and hideth, and sells all he has to buy the field. It is also like a merchant in search of goodly pearls. And then again it is like a net that is cast into the sea.—We learn in this way that the kingdom of heaven is like to many things. Of what use such comparisons, however, are, and what useful teaching they impart, is difficult to understand; one might hear hundreds of such parables, with no other conclusion to arrive at than to have been bored a good deal.—It is to be hoped, though, that the multitudes were edified by it; Jesus, also, to make sure of it, asked them: "Have ye understood all these things?" and they said: "Yes, Lord." Whereupon Jesus said: "Therefore every Scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth of his

treasure things new and old.—With this observation Jesus concluded his very instructive parables, leaving to the multitudes plenty to do to decipher them, and to find the moral if they could.—And Jesus departed from there, and went up to his own country, where he taught in the synagogue. And the people were astonished, saying : “ Is not this the carpenter’s son ? is not his mother called Mary ? and his brethren James and Joses and Simon and Judas ? . . . Whence has this man all these things ? ” and they were offended in him.—From this it is evident that Matthew was sure, that the place of residence of Joseph and Mary was also the country of Jesus, as he distinctly states, that he went up to his own country ; that place was Nazareth in Galilee ; his previous assertion that Bethlehem was to be the country of the Messiah, in allusion to Jesus, seems therefore not to have been believed by himself. It would further appear that Jesus was considered to be the son of Joseph the carpenter, and to have been, when a child, like other children ; if the inhabitants of Nazareth ever could have had the slightest proof of his divine descent, their question “ whence has this man all these things ? ” would never have suggested itself to them.—Jesus did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief, saying : “ a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house.”—This saying of Jesus fully shows, that Galilee was his own country, even by his own admission, and yet it shows that he was not honored in his own house, which conclusively proves, that the members of his household did not at all consider him as the Son of God, for if they had, they would have shown him some consideration on that account. The remark, that a prophet is without honor in his own country, may have been correct ; the reason in all probability was that prophets in childhood gave no indication of having been selected as such by the Lord, and when they made the assertion afterwards, it could necessarily not be considered otherwise than as wilful deception on their part. The lord Jesus, like all other prophets, must have acquired the gift of prophecy, and of performing miracles at a later period of his existence.

CHAPTER XIV.—At that time Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee heard of the fame of Jesus. Herod had caused John the baptist to be beheaded, and he then believed, that John had risen from the dead. Jesus on hearing of the beheading of John, departed thence by a ship to a desert place apart, and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.—It is evident from this, that the lord Jesus dreaded to be beheaded, notwithstanding his commandments to his disciples not to fear those who only kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul ; and notwithstanding the assertion of the Christians, that Jesus would willingly sacrifice his body for the benefit of mankind. (That the multitudes followed him even to the desert place, *car, moreover*, not be used in evidence that Isaiah LIII : 3, referred to Jesus.)—And when it was evening, the disciples mentioned to him, that he had better send the multitudes away to buy victuals for themselves, but Jesus said “ Give ye them to eat ; ” the disciples informed them that they had but five loaves and two fishes ; this was brought

to Jesus by his order, who served it out so well, that all were filled; the multitude consisting of five thousand men, besides a large number of women and children; and the fragments of this feast being collected, there were yet left twelve baskets full. —This, undeniably, was a most remarkable process of serving out provisions, and it is much to be regretted, that Jesus did not impart this wonderful science to some of his followers; of all sciences it would have been the most valuable one. . . . But considering that loaves and fishes, can not come forth from nothing, as all those who prayed for daily bread will testify to be an useless expectation, so it must be supposed, that Jesus had a large provision of bread in his ship. He was running away from Herod, and may have had the intention to remain for some time on the lake of Galilee, and may therefore have laid in an ample supply of bread; the fair opportunity to perform a miracle may however have tempted him to sacrifice, to that purpose, his entire supply of provisions. That the miracle was an eminently successful one, is evident from the good belief and great veneration it met with from so many generations. It may be said that it is not probable, that the supply he had, was sufficient to feed so many thousands; but it should not be forgotten, that Matthew, the sole authority for the large number given, was not over nice, (as his reference to prophecies shows,) to state a little falsehood, occasionally, in support of the doctrine he promulgated: the number therefore may be supposed to be slightly exaggerated; this may be suspected the more readily, as it is not likely, that Matthew put himself to the trouble of counting the multitudes, and not certain even, that he was personally present at the feast at all. Or, as those were the times for miracles, it may, that Matthew used miraculous spectacles through which he could see things magnified if the occasion required it.—After this miracle Jesus straight-way constrained his disciples to get into the ship and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come he was there alone.—This shows us the piety of the lord Jesus; we do not perceive however, as Jesus according to his previous statement was equally powerful and even in some respects more so than God the Father, that prayer could be of any use to him, and therefore we think it more natural to suspect, that instead of prayer, he attended a meeting of some influential or confidential friends, to deliberate upon the means of escape from Herod, and upon the prospects of the heavenly kingdom on earth.—The ship in which the disciples were had not made much way, for the wind was contrary; and in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them walking on the sea; the disciples seeing him coming thought it was a ghost.—This fact sounds miraculous, it may though be borne in mind, that the sea herein mentioned was only the insignificant lake of Gennesareth, also called the sea of Galilee. This lake no doubt, like many small lakes was shallow at some places, and those must have been well known to Jesus, who according to Matthew's reports was constantly on that lake. And besides, as most of the disciples were fishermen, it is likely that the original occupation of Jesus was also that of fisherman, so that it will have cost him little hesitation to wade through the shallow-

ness, as fishermen often do, and as the amateurs of sea-bathing do still oftener. If some of the disciples mistook him for a ghost, such would only prove that some of them were no sailors, and knew not that there was shallowness—Peter wanted to try if he could also walk on the water, but he commenced to sink, and getting scared, he cried out “Lord save me,” but Jesus caught him, saying: “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt.”—Peter was a professional fisherman, and may accordingly have walked through that same water before; his intention may have been to meet Jesus on his way to learn from him the result of the meeting; a wave may have upset him for a moment, and hence the cry for help.—It then became calm and they arrived at Gennesareth. All the sick came to Jesus and those who touched the hem of his garment were healed.—It was very fortunate that there were continually so many sick in the holy land, so that Jesus should have full opportunity to show off his wondrous powers of healing; it is not mentioned that all the sick were healed, but only those who touched the hem of his garment. Jesus must have known by whom the hem of his garment was touched; of course those who could not get near him remained unhealed.

CHAPTER XV.—Then came to Jesus, Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, saying: “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, for they wash not their hands when they eat food.” Jesus gave no direct answer, but as was his usual manner, replied with a question, and with a series of scoldings and abusive names, after which he declared, that not what goes into the mouth, but that what comes out of the mouth, defileth a man.—According to this doctrine a glutton and a wine-bibber commit no sin through intemperance, and it is not surprising therefore, that the Pharisees once asserted that Jesus was a friend of such people. Jesus might furthermore have remembered that abusive words coming out of the mouth of a son of God was quite improper, yea defiling for such a one, as such a saint personage ought never to have called names, but always to have used persuasion in a spirit of forbearance and gentleness. Jesus ought, especially this time, not to have been so hard with the Pharisees, for their remark had some foundation, as Jesus had once positively stated, that he did not come to violate the Jewish laws; wherefor he should have conformed himself to it. The half human nature of Jesus got though the best of him; for though he allowed himself the coarsest remarks towards the Pharisees, he could not suffer them to offer their remarks to him; his obtuseness was of course of human origin.—The disciples mentioned to him that the Pharisees were offended at his remarks, Jesus then replied: “all plants not planted by my heavenly Father shall be rooted up; let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.”—This answer was rather cutting; but, were not all men of the same origin?” and were not the Pharisees put on the world by the same Father who put Jesus there? He required moreover his disciples and followers to obey him blindly; he was therefore as much a leader of the blind as the Pharisee priests.—Jesus now explained his disciples that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the

draught; but those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man, for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murder, adultery, etc. (v. 17, 18)—It is discovered that evil thoughts originate in the brain, and not in the heart; but the Son of the Creator, did not seem to know much about the functions of our organs, and not to have studied physiology and anatomy. Besides this, Jesus forgot to observe that good words sometimes proceed out of the mouth, while murder and other evil deeds do never proceed out of the mouth.—In one of his perambulations with his disciples, Jesus was accosted by a woman of Canaan, imploring him to have mercy on her, as her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. Jesus paid not the slightest attention to the woman, until his disciples besought him to send her away, as she cried after them. He then said to her: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" but she came and worshipped him; he remained unmoved, however, saying: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs," but the woman replied: "the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the master's table." Struck with that answer, Jesus said: "O, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" and from that very hour her daughter was made whole.—No guarantee of any kind is furnished of this wonderful cure, as nobody saw it; it is therefore not impossible that the woman's desire was not accomplished. Those who were possessed of the devil, and desired to be cured, as we saw, came to Jesus; the devil was then ordered to clear out; but in this case the possessed one was absent, and the devil who was within the daughter, could not have heard Jesus order his removal. The manner in which Jesus first tried to get rid of the woman, shows that he only was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, while all people not Israelites were to be compared to dogs; and further we discover that he knew how to repulse those whom he did not wish to heal, namely, by harsh and unfeeling words.—Jesus then returned to the lake of Galilee, and he sat on a mountain, and the multitudes gathered round him, bringing to him, lame, blind, and dumb people, and they were all healed.—It appears again that the country around Galilee was inexhaustibly productive of infirm people; it is to be regretted that the lord Jesus understood so little of anatomy, as we already perceived, for he would have had an excellent opportunity to teach his disciples surgery; which useful science, under the auspices of a god, would have made considerable progress.—After that, Jesus proved again his most miraculous power of serving out bread, for with seven loaves and a few fishes he fed four thousand men, besides women and children, and when they were all filled, there were still seven full baskets left. After this feast of the multitudes, Jesus got into his ship and went to the country of Magdala.—It is remarkable that this second bread miracle, like the first, was performed when the ship was near.

CHAPTER XVI.—The Pharisees and Sadducees then came to Jesus, desiring him to give a sign from heaven.—in all probability to convince them that he was actually the Son of the God of heaven. A simple human understanding would

suggest, that those people were perfectly right, and the Christians, no doubt, would do the same, if any person were to make his appearance at the present time with similar pretensions.—Jesus, however, instead of giving a proper answer, replied by calling them names, at the same time declaring that no other sign would be given them but that of Jonas the prophet, and he then left them.—Already in Chapter XII we took occasion to remark that Jesus did not remain concealed three days and three nights; besides, Jonas remained alive in the whale, while Jesus, they say, was dead in the grave; for these reasons, it is evident that the comparison is not correct. It may therefore be supposed that Jesus intended to imitate the miracle of Jonas on the lake of Galilee, but has been frustrated in his design by being checked in his career sooner than he expected.—After crossing the lake, Jesus enjoined upon his disciples to take heed, and to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, alluding to their doctrine.—It is obvious that the Son of God disliked the doctrine of the Pharisees, though they particularly were the sect among the Jews who preached resurrection. Jesus preached this also, and it would consequently have been supposed that he would have approved of them, instead of which he opposed them; probably because they omitted to preach that Jesus would on that occasion sit on the throne of David. For the rest, impartially considered, Jesus might much more appropriately have compared his own doctrine to leaven; for, like the leaven brings the dough in fermentation, filling the bread with cavities, so the doctrine of Jesus has put mankind in fermentation, filling their brains with silliness.—When Jesus arrived in the county of Cesarea, he asked the disciples what the people said of him. They answered that some believed him to be John the Baptist; others Elias, others again took him for Jeremiah revived, or some other prophet.—This again would not tend to confirm the assertion of the Christians that the prophecy of Isaiah LIII, “and we esteemed him not,” should refer to him.—He then asked his disciples what they thought of him, when Peter said: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”—How Peter came at the information that the expected Christ would be a Son of God, is for us difficult to understand, for he could not have found it in the Old Testament, where we only find mention made of a Messiah (that is, an ‘anointed,’ translated in Christ), but nowhere that the Anointed was to be a Son of God. It is also strange, that while Jesus had been for some time in company with his disciples, Peter was the only one among them who knew who he was; it is therefore not improbable that Jesus had previously communicated to him the secret of his heavenly descent; the pertinent reply of Peter was no doubt calculated to imprint the answer into the memory of the other disciples.—Jesus was greatly satisfied with Peter for his sagacity, for he said to him: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood has hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven; and I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter (rock), and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou

shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (v. 16-19).—It will be perceived that Jesus not only was satisfied with the answer of Bar-jona, but even returned thanks for it, promising a reward; it remains to be seen, however, that this promise was ever fulfilled; in the first place, the church of Christ was not built on this petra alone, seeing that Paul contributed to its establishment quite as much, if not more. Neither can it be said that the gates of hell never prevailed against that Church, as too many fiendish or hellish deeds were perpetrated in Jesus' name by its members. Nor is it probable that Peter ever got the keys of the kingdom of heaven, as such kingdom never existed on earth, and there is no locality in the skies, to our knowledge, where a heaven with gates could be placed. It has also never appeared that Peter had the power to bind or to loose people on earth, for all people since, have died, but nobody remained bound on earth; and as for loosing people on earth, it is not clear what the lord Jesus meant thereby. At any rate, Peter proved until his death, that he could not loose people of prison doors or hand-cuffs, as many a faithful follower of the Christ was put in chains, but not loosed; and even Peter himself was at last bound and nailed to a cross, without his being able to loose anything. . . . From the foregoing words of Jesus, it will readily be perceived how little he esteemed the intelligence of his pious followers; for his supposing that they would believe in a heaven with doors, leads us to suspect of his being quite sure to deal with unmitigated blockheads.—Then he charged his disciples to tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ (v. 20).—What profound humility of the Son of God. The disciple Matthew, however, thought fit to disobey this injunction, preferring to give it publicity; may the Lord Jesus forgive him; it is only the consequence of his great zeal! That this humility assumed by Jesus was merely dissimulation, needs no comment; abundant proof being furnished in the New Testament that Jesus was exceedingly displeased if he was not accepted as the Christ; not only did he constantly vouchsafe woe to such disbelievers, but occasionally expressed the wish to cast them into a pit of fire. It seems to have been known already in those days that the surest way to have a thing public is to communicate it as a secret.—Jesus thereupon informed his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem, where he would have to suffer much from priests and Scribes, and where he would be killed.—This shows, say the Christians, how Jesus desired to sacrifice his life in order to save mankind; it should, nevertheless, be borne in mind, that Jesus intended to pass himself as the anointed of the prophecy, who would sit on the throne of David; it was therefore unavoidable (as the throne of David could not come to him), that he should go to the throne to watch and seize the first favorable opportunity to get himself proclaimed the anointed king of the Lord. That in that attempt resistance was to be met, could easily be conjectured, as also that some fighting might have to be gone through, in which his life would be in danger; but he, like many others under similar circumstances, will have preferred playing for heavy stakes and risk his life, rather than to abandon his ambitious designs.—Matthew adds here the prophecy, that after being killed, Jesus should be raised on the third day; we,

though, extremely doubt if Jesus prophesied this, and are not allowed to believe it, as Jesus would have been in direct contradiction with his former statement, that like Jonas, he would be absent three days and three nights; in that case he would have made his re-appearance on the fourth day, consequently he never could have spoken of the third day.—Peter then took him aside, and began to rebuke him, saying: “Be it far from thee Lord; this shall not be unto thee;” but Jesus who had but recently been so highly pleased with Peter, turned suddenly round saying unto him: “Get thee behind me Satan; thou art an offence unto me.”—It may all be very well for the lord Jesus to be in bad humor, though there was seemingly no occasion to be harshly calling Peter a satan, as he only offered his sympathy, and his intentions no doubt were praiseworthy. This treatment may notwithstanding aid in making people believe that Jesus was the Son of the God of heaven, whom we learned to consider in the Old Testament as extremely fitful, taking a sudden fancy to one, and as suddenly turning round and cursing the same.—Jesus now gave his disciples the choice, whether they would follow him or not; they were free to choose; but they should know that whosoever would save his life would lose it, and whosoever would lose it for his (Jesus’) sake, would find it.—The meaning of this is of course, that those who would fight themselves to death for him, would have glory in the unknown heaven, while others who were afraid would have to expect his revenging sword and die without hope.—The disciples chose all to follow him. To strengthen their courage he added: “Verily, I say unto you, there are some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom (v. 28).—As is well known, the disciples never tasted the pleasure to see their lord Jesus coming in his kingdom, though they all tasted death; even more than 1800 years have passed since their death, and yet Jesus has not come.

CHAPTER XVII.—And after six days Jesus took Peter, and James and John and brought them up unto a high mountain apart; and was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light; and behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him. Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, “Lord it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles &c.” While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud was heard, which said: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.” And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid, but Jesus came and touched them, saying: “arise and be not afraid,” and when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only. He charged them to tell as yet no man of the vision.—This was no doubt a most interesting and remarkable apparition; it is to be regretted that it did not come off in Jerusalem; if that city had witnessed it and heard the mysterious voice, its inhabitants would probably have been converted *en masse*. Had but Jesus taken all his disciples along, they could have profited by this edifying spectacle; but he entertained evidently a preference for the three above mentioned disciples. Some

pretend that Peter, James and John were his brother's, sons of Mary. These three favored disciples must have received a divine inspiration to make them recognize Moses and Elias, for how else could they have known who the persons were who paid Jesus a visit, as they never saw them before, and it is not likely that the portraits of Moses and Elias existed already in those days. To pay the lord Jesus a visit was very kind, even courteous, on the part of Moses and Elias ; they were also individuals well worthy of establishing friendly relations with him ; it is true that they did not enjoy the honor of being sons of God, but like Jesus they were sons of men who had given proof of knowing the efficacious effect of miracles upon the masses, and of knowing how to make use of it. Moses in particular, was a great man in that respect, for he taught his people by that means to fear a man-god, called Lord, though he was never seen . Taking further in consideration that if the people had not known the Lord, they could not have known his son, and that on that account Jesus could not have been a Saviour to them, so it is even difficult to decide who was the greatest Saviour of the two, Jesus or Moses ; this only is certain they were both great men of the Lord, and worthy to be placed together. Whether Jesus may have intended to try this miracle afterwards in Jerusalem, and only took his most trustworthy disciples with him to witness its first experiment, this Matthew does not state, but noticing Jesus' conduct, it has all appearance of it.

And when they came back to the multitudes, a certain man came to Jesus, saying : " O, Lord have mercy on my son for he is a lunatic and sore-vexed, for oft times he falls into the fire, and oft in the water."—It is remarkable that in those days such strange maladies prevailed in the promised land, of which never was heard in any other country.—The disciples had not been able to cure the boy of his queer sickness, but Jesus came and did so without difficulty, though at the same time complaining, that this generation was faithless and perverse ; and he asked how long he was to be with them, and how long he was to suffer them. Then in reply to their question, why they could not cure the sick, he stated it was because of their unbelief, " If " said he, " ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain ' Remove hence to yonder place,' and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you."—It was truly very unfortunate for the son of the ALmighty, that he had to live among such thoroughly unbelievers who vexed him daily, and his wish to quit this earth must have been very great indeed. His opinion however, that not one had as much faith as a grain of mustard seed, was rather unfounded, as many had faith, even the father of the individual who fell alternately in fire and water. was a proof on the spot of abundance of faith. The Canaanite woman too had given proof of extensive faith ; no less did the disciples by following Jesus ; and thousands of examples through all ages of christendom show numbers of people of very strong faith, much stronger than mustard. Not one of those faithful nevertheless has ever been able to remove a mountain by command. The exaggeration used by Jesus in his language needs no comment, as in fact it is obvious by not more nor less than a barbarous falsehood.—Matthew thereupon inserts, that Jesus foretold his disciples that he would

be killed, and would rise from the dead on the third day.—Whereas this was already communicated in the preceding Chapter, it was quite unnecessary to repeat it, and accordingly we presume that this v. 22 and 23 might as well have been left out.—Jesus then went to Capernaum, (his projected journey to Jerusalem appears to have been postponed) and on his arrival at that place, with his disciples, Peter was asked by those who collected tribute money, if his master paid no tribute. He said yes, and when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him saying : “ What thinkest thou, Simon ? of whom so the kings of the earth take custom and tribute ? of their own children or of strangers ? ” Peter said of strangers. “ Then,” said Jesus, “ are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea and take the first fish that comes up, and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money, take that and give it to them for me and thee.”—This of course, was a most excellent way of paying taxes, only requiring a good deal of patience for the tax gatherers, though it may be that the desired fish was in this case already on the hook when Jesus gave the order, so that Peter had only to take it up, without being long at sea. To put a piece of money in the mouth of a fish, and to fix the fish to a hook and put it in the water, to be drawn up at a given time, may be a very ingenious occupation, but it is not necessary to be son of the Lord for doing such things.

CHAPTER XVIII.—At the same time the disciples came to Jesus asking, who of them would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ?—This question probably had suggested itself to the disciple in consequence of the preference shown by Jesus to Peter, James and John. They must have been puzzled to know, whether this preference could be profitable to them, for on a former occasion, Jesus speaking very highly of John the Baptist, said that he was nevertheless less than the least in the kingdom of heaven ; judging from this, the disciples could not know with certainty who would be best off hereafter, those who were most beloved by Jesus or those who were not.—In illustration of an answer, Jesus called to him a child, and said that they should be like that child, and whosoever would be as humble, would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.—This answer is generally greatly admired by the Christians ; it is, though, not to be supposed that the disciples admired it likewise, as it was not a straight answer to their question, but left them as much in uncertainty as before. Besides, considered impartially, the saying that men should be like children is very ridiculous, seeing that in a full grown person the intellect is more developed and his way of thinking is consequently entirely changed, so that it would be impossible, no matter how strongly he desired it, to return to that simplicity and ignorance of early childhood. And yet it would be in violation of the laws of Providence, visibly requiring, that man should not be a child, but should develop his mental qualities to the fullest extent. Furthermore, Jesus ought to have taken in consideration that the inclination to evil is as much in a child as it is in a full grown person ; the evil he does, may not be as injurious to society, as the child is kept under con-

trol, and has no power to act freely ; but the child cannot in reality be called innocent for all that, and there is no more of the saint in its composition than in the full grown person. Neither seems Jesus to have taken in consideration, that the by him so hated Pharisees, Sadducees, Priests and Scribes, as also his rivals the false prophets, were altogether once little children, and had the germ in them of what they at a later period showed themselves to be. Jesus was therefore undoubtedly in error. He may have come to it because he was fond to see people easy of belief, and this quality (which is nothing but want of mental power) is greater with children than with full grown persons, and from this, may have originated his great admiration for little children, those little angels of flesh and bones.—Jesus, as it seems, occupied himself also with converting little children unto belief in him, for he says : “ Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone be hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”—This representation of drowning one with a mill-stone about the neck, was perhaps very worthy of the son of God the avenger, the more so as he taught, that there was a hell underneath, so that such person by sinking in the sea, would be brought to hell with all speed. However kind the meek lord Jesus thus proved to be for little Christian children, he was a rather severe judge for nurses, and others who wait upon children ; for these persons in the performance of their duties have occasionally to offend those little darlings, and the meek lord Jesus would on that account do not less than drown them unmercifully in the depth of the sea. How happy that the lord Jesus was never allowed to do such atrocities.—Jesus continues to offer remarks on the same subject, winding up with the assertion, that a man who has hundred sheep, one of which goes astray, will rejoice more over that sheep, if he finds it, than over the remaining ninety-nine, which went not astray ; and so it was in heaven, where the angels rejoice more over one that confesseth, than over a great many, who do not need confession.—This assertion, though not in fact connected with the subject proper, which treated about little children, was not entirely without sense ; Jesus only omitting to notice that the man who finds his lost sheep, rejoices more over the success of his recovering an article that has a marketable value, than over the sheep itself, for in all probability he should take the first butcher's offer for his sheep which would be the surest way of preventing the recurrence of trouble on the sheep's account. The love of the man for the sheep could thus not be very desirable to the latter. Jesus intended however to convey the idea, that the love of angels for repentant sinners was great ; his comparison was accordingly ill-chosen, showing evidence of sophistry, which is not proper in so a high a personage as the son of God, the producer of all wisdom. And the moral of his story is that in order to monopolize the love of the denizens of heaven, it is necessary to go astray sometimes, so as to be able to arrive at repentance, such being the surest introduction to heavenly favor. This is the genuine christian view of the subject.—Jesus further exhorts his disciples, as follows : “ If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone ; if he will not hear, take one or two witnesses, in case

of failure, tell it unto the church ; and if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican (v. 17).—A heathen-man and a publican are therefore not to be considered as brothers in any case. Leaving this for what it is worth, we will only observe, that Jesus was here ; in evident contradiction with a former statement, requiring never to resent injury. Jesus probably saw an increase in the number of his followers, they might hence assume a bolder tone.—The talkative Peter then asked, in all simplicity, how oft he would have to forgive his brother ; if seven times would do ; but Jesus answered, not seven, but seventy times seven.—This again is at variance with his teaching to denounce the trespasser to the church. Yet, of what stuff could a person be made who submitted four hundred and ninety times to ill treatment, before resenting it ; long before reaching that period the aggressor would have been in the established habit of treating his subject as the most abject of slaves.—Jesus seems, however, to have been too shrewd not to perceive that he had slightly exaggerated, for he suddenly passes on to another subject, giving a parable, saying : “ Therefore is the kingdom likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants ” etc (v 23–25).—According to this parable, the king does not forgive his servants so readily ; the servant, on the contrary, on his trespassing, is delivered unto the tormentors. And as the king did, so would the heavenly Father do. Inconsistency is a prominent quality of Jesus, and in none of his parables or preachings more evident than in the above ; (for besides that it does not accord with his theory of forgiveness), he first compares the kingdom of heaven with a certain king, and at the end of the story at once the Father is the subject of comparison, instead of the heavenly kingdom. Such blunders of rhetoric are apt to show that the lord Jesus was gifted with a genius of hallucinations.

CHAPTER XIX.—And it came to pass, that when Jesus finished those sayings, he departed from Galilee and came into the coast of Judca, beyond the Jordan, and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them there.—It seems that everywhere in Judea, as in Galilee, whole multitudes, troubled with all kind of infirmities and diseases, infected the public highways.—Some Pharisees came to him to tempt him, saying : “ Is it lawful for a man to put his wife away for every cause ? ” Jesus opposed this, quoting in support (what may be found in Genesis II), that man and wife shall be one flesh, and adding thereto, what God had joined together, no man should put asunder.—It may be supposed, if the Pharisees had asked him whether divorce was lawful, when committed for Jesus’ sake, that the reply would have been very different, for one who taught that one should leave his father, mother, brother and sister for his sake to be worthy of him (Luke XIV : 26), showed thereby to entertain slight consideration for the most hallowed ties of nature, and could accordingly not have much respect for a tie of man’s own making. Also, on the same day, yea, in the same breath, (v. 29 of this chapter) he teaches, that whosoever forsakes father, mother, wife, etc.,

for his name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. . . . Though now Moses' saying, that man and wife are one flesh, may contain some truth, taking male and female kind as one whole, forming mankind, yet one cannot apply such to every couple separately, as they, in a great many cases, labor under an absence of sympathy, which is not fit to prove one flesh. Jesus seems to have overlooked this, and not to have considered that it never was manifest that God himself obliged all the couples to be united. It always has been seen that they themselves selected their partners, and often made very bad selections, where-for Jesus could not speak here of what God had joined, of a joining that is obviously made by men themselves.—On the further assertion of Jesus, that Moses ought not to have granted the right to divorce from a wife, this being equal to adultery, the disciples said that in that case it was not good to marry (v. 10).—Those pious people were evidently greatly astonished about that new doctrine, and did not admire it at all. They seem to have understood better than Jesus that by following this doctrine, one puts one's entire happiness in jeopardy, as everybody can be mistaken in his choice, and that marriage, under such circumstances, is like the move of a desperate gambler, who puts all his fortune on a single card. . . . And why should people risk so foolishly their life's happiness? Because, is the answer, to please the Lord! For no other reason could possibly be given, as such prohibition could not be of any advantage to any one. And what an intelligent answer, in order to please a lord, that nobody ever saw or heard; an unhappy man and woman that feel no sympathy for each other, perhaps even hate one another, shall be compelled to remain bound together for their whole life, making every day a day of misery and of vexation. No, when people after marriage, discover that they do not suit each other, and are not able to live in harmony, let them rather divorce than provoke one another all the time. If such is not according to the pleasure of the Christian lord, it will at least be according to the views of the God of Nature, that did not make man and woman to be unhappy together, but to be happy, by loving one another. But if they cannot love, let them go asunder, since love is the only tie wherewith Nature ties husband and wife. . . . It may be supposed that society is benefited by prohibiting dissolution of marriage, as the abandonment of children would come to its charge; but one ought to keep in mind that in a civilized state of society measures can be put in force to prevent such abandonment, even as against other misdemeanors and crimes; and as for what regards the children themselves, they would probably be better cared for under the guidance of strangers than under that of parents who do not agree, seeing that disharmony with the parents has the worst effect upon the children. . . . We should on that account, not be understood as if opposed to marriage; for marriage (the union of one man and one woman) is undoubtedly one of the noblest institutions that ever existed on earth, as promoting to a great extent morality and civilization; but we only intended to show that it is against good sense to compel people to remain for life tied up together, if they both would like to live apart. If mutual affection exist between husband and wife, they shall not quit one another,

and it is then unnecessary to make the engagement compulsory ; while, on the other hand, if no affection exists, it will be much better that they live separately. Would it therefore, not be unwise to force upon people compulsion of that kind ?

When now the disciples had given utterance to their opinion that upon such terms it were not good to marry, Jesus gave them intelligibly to understand that they had better get themselves eunuchated, for the kingdom of heaven's sake (v. 11, 12).—From this advice it is fully shown to what degree of fanaticism Jesus wished to drive his disciples. That the advice is in direct violation with the laws of nature, which are the laws of Providence, that evidently created the sexes for each other, will need no comment. Besides that, the Christian Church would soon have come to naught if all the converts, in an excess of piety, had wished to secure entrance into the kingdom of heaven in the manner indicated. It is difficult to say whether this advice was intended also to apply to women ; but as they are less fit to undergo that pious Christian operation, those poor creatures would have to suffer much. And seeing that a general compliance to said direction would lead to great social disorders, we dare to affirm that the advice is not only foolish, but even bears the mark of having originated in the brain of one whose fanatical enthusiasm, or hypocrisy, overleaped all bounds of decency. —Little children were thereupon brought to Jesus that he should put his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said : " Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come to me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."—The idea of innocence of children, as fancied by Jesus, was not a little exaggerated : we spoke about this in Chapter XVIII. It was, besides, too partial to state that a child should go to heaven at all events, while the majority of human kind (all those who should not acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God) should be doomed to perpetual hell-fire. It would, we should think, be more just to cause the souls of little children to be sent back to the earth, that they might remain there a certain number of years on trial, so as to see whether their credulity was such as to merit the great boon destined to them. We suppose, however that Jesus with his saying, " for such is the kingdom of heaven," did not mean the existence hereafter, but the kingdom of heaven on earth, which he intended to found in Judea, sitting on the throne of David ; and those children then being yet younger, would more fully enjoy the fruits and the bliss of his reign in that delightful kingdom.—A young man then came to Jesus, asking what he would have to do to have eternal life. Jesus said he should not murder, not commit adultery, not steal, not bear false witness, honor his father and his mother, and love his neighbor like himself. The young man declared to have acted according to those commandments, and what more could he lack ? thereupon he was informed, if he would be perfect, then he should sell all he had, give it to the poor, and follow Jesus. The young man on hearing this, went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.—The first precepts given this time by Jesus were from the ten commandments ; that its strict obedience would be sufficient to secure eternal bliss, is nevertheless not in accordance with the

Christian doctrine, requiring, as the most principal requisition, yea, as an absolute necessity, full belief in Jesus (Luke XVI: 10). Jesus, therefore, in this instance, did not speak in accordance with his own doctrine; for what came next, regarding the selling of all he had and the following of Jesus, was only mentioned as a higher degree of perfection, and not as absolute necessity.—When the young man had left, Jesus said, that a rich man could hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven; it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven (v. 23, 24).—If this could be true, there would be no chance for bliss hereafter to those Christians who possess riches. Jesus was evidently the friend not only of those who were poor in spirit, but also of those poor in earthly goods. Also, it was not likely that any others, but such, should be inclined to follow his sublime precepts (for instance, of living like the fowls, who do not sow nor reap, and of having no more raiment than the lilies of the fields, etc.)—The pious disciples were quite taken back at the words of Jesus, and asked: “Who, then, can be saved?” Jesus, probably to set himself right again, answered: “With men this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”—This saying, however, being not at all in keeping with his previous one, was probably caused by his consciousness of having gone too far. And as for the assertion that for God all *things are* possible, is only correct to a certain extent, namely: as far as agreeing with the immutable laws of nature, since what is false or contrary to those laws can never be possible for God, as the whole creation would tumble to a chaos in case those laws could be violated; hence a camel can never go through the eye of a needle, not even by the power of God himself. This assertion, like the many others that preceded from that great Son of God, is again utterly exaggerated, almost more so than all the rest.—Peter, somewhat comforted by that answer, asked what they, who had forsaken all for him, were to have for their sacrifice. Jesus then promised them that in the regeneration they should sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.—The disciples were now all comforted by this answer, for it allayed their anxiety, caused by the foregoing severe precepts of Jesus, and it was therefore very proper in Peter to ask so sensible a question. They must have felt exceedingly flattered by the prospect of their sitting each upon a throne around the regenerated throne of David; also it is to be regretted that this promise was never fulfilled, and never will be, as nothing earthly remained of the disciples, no more than of the twelve tribes of Israel. It may be asked why Jesus did not promise them to judge the Christians, as they had more concern with them than with the Israelites; the reason simply is, that Jesus did not know himself that his doctrine would spread beyond Israel. We may, moreover remark, in conclusion of this answer, in what limited and earthly manner Jesus viewed the resurrection, so much thought of by Christians.

CHAPTER XX.—Again Jesus entertained his disciples with a parable, comparing the kingdom of heaven to a householder, who went out to hire laborers

to labor in his vineyard.—On perusal, it appears that Jesus compares the householder to himself, and not to the kingdom of heaven, as he stated. He should not have made such misstatements, this being not according to propriety, much less so for a son of God.—Jesus then went to Jerusalem, only taking his disciples with him.—By looking over the preceding chapters, it is established that Jesus, during his whole course as prophet, therein described, had not yet been in Jerusalem; we merely mention this, since the general representation, as if Jesus had principally resided in that city, and preached to large audiences in the temple, is wholly without foundation.—Matthew informs us now again, that Jesus foretold, on his way thither, that he would be crucified in Jerusalem, and be raised from the dead.—We made our remarks on this subject already, and stated that it appears uncontrovertible, that Matthew wrote his book after the death of Jesus, and hence the possibility of Matthew's enlarging upon this prophecy, and adding of such circumstances as then came to his knowledge.—The mother of the sons of Zebediah now came to Jesus, requesting that her sons should sit in his kingdom, one on the right and the other on the left hand.—The woman was under the impression, of course, that it was not at all impossible but Jesus might succeed in establishing himself as king on the throne of David; it cannot well be supposed that she had reference to a kingdom within or beyond the clouds, since to sit on thrones in such a place could not be desirable for her sons, so that she would not have requested it.—Jesus then asked these two disciples if they were able to drink out of the cup he could drink of, and be baptised with the baptism he was baptised with. They answered: "We are able." This determined answer came, perhaps, unexpected; Jesus answered, to know that they could drink of the same cup as he, and be baptised with the same baptism, but nevertheless he could not give them the desired places, whereas his Father had to dispose of them (v. 23).—It must be acknowledged that it was very convenient for Jesus to have a Father whose power was either greater or rather limited, according as circumstances rendered it desirable. This time it may have been policy in Jesus not to grant the request to those two disciples, so as not to rouse the envy of the others. Less judicious was his statement, that they could be baptised with the same baptism, and drink of the same cup as he, thereby fully acknowledging that his suffering on earth was not of such great effect as the church claims for it; for, if it was of the same effect with common men, the Son of God cannot have accomplished, nor suffered more than ordinary people under similar circumstances do.—On approaching Jerusalem, Jesus met two blind men, who, without ever having seen him, at once knew that the son of David was near, proclaiming this so very loudly that even the multitudes, who followed Jesus from Jericho, thought proper to rebuke them. Jesus stood still to ask them what they wished. They wished to see once more, whereupon Jesus had only to touch their eyes, and the operation was performed; they saw, and followed him.—Since blind people cannot be supposed to see who is approaching, it may be presumed that those two men had been informed by others whom they should hail as son of David. Jesus must have had friends in

Jerusalem, who, aware of the powerful effects of miracles on the crowd, had despatched those two men to be healed of blindness on the public highway, hallooing and shouting all the way long, in order to make the most of such remarkable event.

CHAPTER XXI.—And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Mount Olive, Jesus sent two disciples into the village over against, there to find and bring him a she-ass tied, and a colt with her; that the words might be fulfilled of the prophet, who foretold that the king of Jerusalem should come meek, sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.—The idea that suggested to Jesus of exhibiting his horse (or rather ass)-manship, was by his own admission, to apply a prophecy to himself. In this manner it is free to everybody to apply prophecies to everybody; the prophecy in his case, however, was not fulfilled, for the very simple reason that he never was king of Jerusalem. Jesus, the fisherman, was mistaken in his great expectation. The prophecy he referred to is from Zechariah IX: “The king shall come riding upon an colt, the foal of an ass.” Jesus, though, preferred to sit on the ass, and have the colt run behind. The reason why Zechariah foretold that the king should ride on an ass, the foal of an ass, was, because the law of Moses (vide Deut. XVII) prohibited the kings of Israel to keep horses. That commandment had never been obeyed, and by representing the new king that was to be, as obeying it, a general inference might naturally be arrived at of his faithful adherence to all the commandments of the Lord. . . That Jesus knew that an ass and a colt were in the next village, has been adduced as a proof of his omniscience; but it would, perhaps, be more sensible to believe that Jesus had been informed by some one that such cattle was ready for him.—If any one said aught to them, they should say, the Lord has need of the ass and the colt.—This is a sufficient evidence, we think, in favor of our assertion, that the ass was brought there and kept in readiness for him, and that some people knew of it.—Jesus then sitting on the ass, rode into the city in right royal style; his disciples had put their clothes on the brute, so that he must have sat quite elevated, and the multitudes spread their garments on the road, exclaiming: “Hozanna to the son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hozanna in the highest!” And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying: “Who is this?” (v. 10).—It is indeed not surprising that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were startled by the strange spectacle that must have met their view, of crowds of undressed rabble crying as if intoxicated, and surrounding a fisherman sitting upon an ass, harnessed up for the occasion with rags; which fisherman they intended to proclaim as king. This spectacle may have appeared ludicrous to some, but to the greater portion of the inhabitants it must have appeared a serious disturbance, since the mob must have been quite large.—Jesus at once proceeded to the temple, where he cast out all those that bought and sold there and the money-changers, exclaiming that they had made the temple a den of thieves.—That

those people had their places of business there, was probably in accordance with established custom, and Jesus evidently used his words as a pretext to cast them out, and the way he went to work leads to show that he intended to act as owner of the house, or as son in the house of his father, as he called it; most likely with the idea of making it his royal palace.—He performed thereupon many miracles in the temple. The chief priests and Scribes, when they saw those things, and heard the crying of Hosanna, they were sore displeased, and asked Jesus if he heard what they said; the answer was, that he understood it very well; then he left them and went out of the city into Bethany, where he lodged.—It admits of no doubt, that Jesus, in his supposition that he should ride into Jerusalem to be made king at once, had been mistaken; neither does it appear that the time had arrived for him to take possession of the house of his father. It is very probable that the presence of the chief-priests had a marked effect upon the mob in calming the excitement, and perhaps of decreasing Jesus' followers, so that he thought it more prudent to leave the temple and city, in order to avoid being taken by the Roman soldiers there in garrison, to a less splendid lodging.—On the morning, as he returned to the city, he hungered, and he went up to a fig-tree, but finding no fruit, only leaves on the tree, he cursed it, when it forthwith withered; which astonished the disciples greatly.—What great, noble and useful miracle of cursing a fig-tree, because it has no fruit at a time (in the spring) when no fruit was on any tree! How worthy of the Son of God! and to cause it to wither, is indeed remarkable; there are, however, some who might imitate that miracle easy enough, as there are as many poisons for trees as there are for animals. According to Mark XI, the tree only withered the next day.—Jesus then addressed the astonished disciples, saying: that faith was all-sufficient, not only could they therewith wither fig-trees, but they could even move mountains therewith and cast them into the sea (v. 21)—As this will appear incredible, it is to be regretted that Jesus did not give a proof of what faith could do in the way of moving mountains, for instance, by putting Mount Olive on the heads of the chief priests and Pharisees; such proof would have been quite convincing; but as he never performed a miracle with any mountains (however fond he was of miracles), we must presume that mountain-moving was exceedingly difficult, even for him, and that therefore others had better not attempt it at all.—All that the disciples should ask in prayer, believing, he further said, they would receive.—No doubt this would be as true as his previous assertion. It may be regretted that the disciples did not immediately begin to pray for the coming of Jesus' kingdom, as it would have saved him the trouble of leaving Jerusalem the first night, and of being crucified afterwards.

The priests and elders then came to Jesus, while he was teaching, asking: "By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee authority?" As usual the answer was not direct, and instead of answering, he put forth the question, if the baptism of John was from heaven or of men? The priests did not wish to answer this question, fearing the multitudes, who held John for a prophet; they therefore said they could not tell. Jesus thereupon replied: "Neither tell I you

by what authority I do these things.”—As it is beyond doubt that the power to perform miracles was derived from the spirit of God, we cannot conceive why Jesus made a mystery of it; it is true if he had made a statement to that effect, that the priests would have put him to the test, but what was that to a son of an Almighty God, to whom his father had given full power? by one suitable miracle, at such a moment, he would have convinced all those people of his divine mission; by not answering the question put to him, we therefore believe that Jesus acted not in a proper manner.—He proceeded now straightways to give a parable, not in the least connected with the question of the chief-priests; the upshot of which was, that publicans and harlots would go to heaven before them. Then follows another parable, with the moral, that the stone rejected by the builders was made the head of the corner, and whosoever would fall on that stone would be broken, but on whomsoever it would fall, would be ground to powder.—The tendency of that story can have been no other than to make the chief-priests and elders understand, that they had better not attack him, as like the stone, he might grind them to powder. (Which he never was able to do).—The chief priests and Pharisees disliked his parables, but they did not lay hands on him for fear of the multitudes, who took him for a prophet.

CHAPTER XXII.—Jesus related yet another parable, in which he compares, as he said, his kingdom to a king.—It should be unnecessary to remark that the comparison of a heavenly kingdom, a passive object, to a person who is an active object, can never make a correct comparison; it is further evident, on perusing this story, that there is here no question of a kingdom, but that Jesus furnishes a representation of himself and how he would act as king.—The Pharisees watching an opportunity to warrant his arrest by first entangling him, sent their disciples with some Herodians to him to ask, if it was lawful to pay tribute to Cesar. But Jesus perceiving their plot, said: “Why tempt ye me ye hypocrites? Show me your tribute money.” And on the plea that Cesar’s image and superscription were on the face of it, he told them to render unto Cesar what was Cesar’s.—Seeing that all coins were stamped with the Emperor’s image, without his being therefore the owner of it all, there can be no doubt that Jesus’ reply was only an evasion. A son of God ought, though, not to have resorted to devices, as such is a sure sign of weakness.—Thereupon the Sadducees who do not believe in resurrection, came unto him, and they asked him, how it would be in the resurrection with a woman, who during her life, had been the wife of seven brothers in succession; which of the brothers would have her for wife? Jesus put them to silence, by stating, that in the resurrection people do not marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.—It is to be regretted that the Sadducees did not ask him on this occasion how all the hosts of angels are brought into existence; an answer to such question would have been very instructive as

augmenting human knowledge in heavenly affairs, of which Jesus has communicated us so little.—When the Pharisees heard the answer to the Sadducees, they returned to Jesus with the question, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” he answered, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;” the next great commandment was, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” The Pharisees had nothing to say against this.—Those people must have felt mortified in not being able to put him to silence in turn; yet they might have done it by remarking, that in order to please the audience, Jesus spoke against his own teaching, for to love God thy Lord with all thy heart, thy soul, and thy mind, was to love the Lord of Israel in that manner, that was, the God of Moses, who would suffer no other beside him. Jesus, on the contrary, taught that he was the equal of the God of heaven, and that every one should show him (Jesus) absolute obedience, lest being cast into the hell-fire; he required consequently more love to himself than for God thy Lord. Furthermore; did we not read that he ordered his followers to love himself more than their own blood relations, more than father, mother, daughter, son, and wife, and those who did not love him to that extent, were not worthy of him. He also taught not to have come to bring peace, but the sword; now these loving doctrines of his do not at all agree with his answer, (Love thy neighbour as thyself.)—He then asked the Pharisees what they thought of the Christ, and whose son he would be? they replied a son of David, whereupon Jesus, (probably to show his ability in putting puzzling questions,) asked them. “How then could David call him Lord if he was his (David’s) son?”—The Pharisees were unable to answer. The reason must have been, simply, that they were not well versed in the bible, else they would have known that David did not speak of any Christ but spoke of Israel, who is repeatedly designated in the Old Testament as the first born son of the Lord, and sometimes by abbreviation only called the son.

CHAPTER XXIII.—Jesus spoke to the multitudes and disciples, exhorting them to do all that the Pharisees and Scribes bade them to observe, for that was from the books of Moses, but not to do after their deeds, for they said and did not.—Here again Jesus contradicted himself, (for in Chapter XVI: 6) he taught “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Moreover he forgot to notice that he reproached the Pharisees with a thing, he often did himself; for he also not always did as he spoke; for instance we saw him in the preceding chapter proclaiming in public two commandments to be the greatest, which are totally opposed to what he desired his followers to do. He also preached humility, but passed himself off for the equal of God; he preached meekness and forgiveness, but cursed entire cities to hell, only because they did not admire his miracles; he prohibited the calling of names under great penalty, but he himself ceased not to call the Scribes and Pharisees ‘fools and vipers;’ of such instances of inconsistency his orations are full.—Now Jesus pro-

ceeded to cry *woe* over the Scribes and Pharisees in a profusion of words (v. 13-36); he calls them this time repeatedly hypocrites, fools, blind serpents, and generations of vipers. In this address, (not exactly overflowing with meekness,) Jesus gives them his *woe* eight times, and the assurance to boot, that they cannot escape damnation of hell; all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the righteous Abel down to Zacharias, would all come upon them. "Verily, I say unto you," pursued Jesus, "all these things shall come upon this generation."—It was very unfortunate for the generation of Pharisees, then living, that all the righteous blood shed on earth, even from its commencement, would be visited upon them, how awful is that! And as the globe is inhabited by many nations, among whom a great many found pleasure in killing their fellow-men, much, yea very much, righteous blood must have been shed. These fools of Pharisees must have an awful time of it in hell, if a full atonement of all that righteous blood is to be burned out of them. Indeed, though they were hypocrites, fools, blind serpents, and vipers, still we pity them, for it is too hard to be punished for crimes of others.—Jesus, after this, complained that Jerusalem had not allowed her children to be gathered by him as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; therefore her house (temple) should be left desolate and they would not see him there again until they would say: "Blessed is he, who comes in the name of the Lord." Having said this (as will appear from the following chapter) Jesus left the temple.—It must have been a great blow to the Scribes and Pharisees when they heard that the temple would be left without Jesus, and that they would not see him back again before they should bless him. We apprehend however that Jesus did not speak entirely true, and that he was a few days later brought before the Chief priest, Scribes and Pharisees without being blessed by them. On well weighing the above mentioned saying of Jesus, the supposition may be arrived at, that perceiving to what degree he had assured to himself the hatred of the Priests and Scribes, he resolved upon not coming again amongst them in the temple until he should have succeeded in being proclaimed king of Jerusalem. In that case the temple would not be left desolate, for then Jesus, as worthy Son of his Father, could do no less than occupy the house of his father, and make it to his royal palace. It is to be regretted, that those sublime ideas were never realized, nor ever will, because the generation of Scribes and Pharisees then living, has passed away; and if Jesus came down at the present time, he would find no temple and no Pharisee to call out, blessed is he. The present generation of priests would be so amazed, seeing a live man coming down from the clouds, that not one of them would be willing to cry, 'blessed is he,' if they should ejaculate something, it would be more likely a curse than a blessing.

CHAPTER XXIV.—When Jesus departed from the temple, the disciples came to him to show him the buildings thereof, but he did not feel disposed, to look at them, merely stating, that not one stone should remain upon the other. He from there, went to Mount Olive, where his disciples asked him to tell them, when

these things would be, and what would be the sign of his coming. Whereupon Jesus replied, that they should take heed that no man should deceive them; for many would come, and say, "I am the Christ," and they would deceive many. And they would hear of wars, and of rumors of wars, and of famine, pestilence, and earthquakes, but this was but the beginning of sorrows; also the disciples would be delivered up to affliction and death, and they would be hated for Jesus' name's sake. And many false prophets would arise and deceive many; but the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world, and this would be the sign that the end was coming. When then the disciples should see the beginning of this abomination of desolation, they should flee into the mountains; and whosoever would be on the housetop should not come down to save any thing out of the house; neither should he who was in the field go back to get his clothes; (for there would be no time to spare, it seems). And Woe unto them, that are with child, and that give such in those days! The disciples should pray, that the flight be not in the winter nor on the Sabbath-day, for there would be a tribulation such as never was ever since the beginning of the world, and never would be; and if those days would not be shortened, no flesh would be saved, but for the elect's sake, those days would be shortened. Therefore, if any one was to say to them: "Here is Christ or there," they should not believe it, for false christs and false prophets should arise and would show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. "Wherefore if they shall say unto you: 'Behold he is in the desert,' go not forth;" 'behold he is in the secret chamber;' "believe it not." Immediately after the tribulation of those days should the Sun be darkened and the Moon not give her light, and the Stars should fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens should be shaken. And then should appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth should mourn, and they should see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, sending forth his angels with a great sound of the trumpets, etc.—From this prophecy of Jesus, we learn his programme to be a descent on earth, with all pomp and circumstance, and accompanied by a band of celestial trumpet-blowers; this must be a super-magnificent spectacle indeed; and how happy that all the tribes of the earth will enjoy the sight! We also sincerely hope, that it will not take place on a Sabbath-day, lest the people, then in Church, should not see it, and also that it will not take place in winter, as it might be too cold outside, to go to look at it. It is nevertheless to be regretted, that the Sun and the Moon are to be darkened on the occasion, as it will thus be impossible for all the tribes of the earth, (who according to the promise of Jesus shall all see it,) to see any thing at all; it may be, though, that the Stars that are to fall on earth will keep their power of lumination, and in that case they may be tied on the shoes (as in some countries is done with glow-worms) and serve for lanterns. It is evident that Jesus intended to treat mankind pretty soon with that magnificent exhibition, since he advises his disciples how to act when it was coming; it was accordingly to have taken place during their life time, at the same time with the dea-

truction of the temple. . . The temple now has been destroyed some 40 years after that time; many of the disciples were then dead, if not all. It may be that some of the disciples were yet alive, still at present, as is quite certain, they are all dead, and notwithstanding this, Jesus has not made his descent from the clouds, neither during the destruction of the temple, nor afterwards; we therefore, though reluctantly, conclude, that the great son of God abandoned his project. And in support of this conclusion we may observe, that he could not carry out his magnificent scheme, even if he wished, for the reason that a human body cannot sit on a cloud, since it is too heavy for that, and that the stars cannot come down like figs from a tree; not only, because they are kept in their respective places in obedience to their mutual attraction, but also because they are rather too big to find all a place on the earth; a single one coming in contact with this globe would cause a most awful smash up and leave no place for others. For those few, but evident reasons we are most naturally led to believe, that the son of God, mockingly attesting to be the Son of Man, deceived his pious disciples with pious lies, even with lies of the grossest sort, too ridiculous in fact to be believed by any one laying claim to common sense. These pious disciples must undeniably have been very green, for otherwise they would have made Jesus, by this time, the subject of public ridicule, and this they did not. Moreover, the many false prophets, who were to perform great miracles, have as yet not made their appearance. Jesus, as we see, evidently thought that false prophets could perform great miracles; but considering that talking about great miracles as he did now, is much easier than performing them, we must conclude, that he who could do so was a still greater false prophet.—In support of his great and wonderful prophecy which never took place, Jesus exclaimed: "Verily I say unto you; this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." (v. 34.)—We learn by this, how true a false-prophet Jesus was, for his generation did pass; and verily we say unto you these things were never fulfilled.—He further exhorts his disciples to watch for they would not know when their Lord would come; he would come like a thief in the night.—It is to be feared that many of the simple followers of Jesus passed many a sleepless night in consequence of this warning, and quite unnecessarily, as the thief never came, even if they had attained twice Methuselah's age, they might have enjoyed a good sleeping, without apprehension of being cheated out of their night's rest; For it is more than 18½ century since the warning and he came not. Whole Christendom though, is still looking for the coming of Jesus; therefore the Christians, because they believe this beautiful promise, call themselves enlightened, in opposition of those nations who do not believe in these splendid words which never were fulfilled. How wonderful is not the faith of that pious part of human kind.

CHAPTER XXV.—Jesus once more proceeded to give a parable, comparing the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins, five of which were wise and the other five foolish.—By his own admission therefore the kingdom of Christ is foolish for one

half. This story not being very instructive, we shall not comment on what he states of the five foolish ore's.—The kingdom of heaven was also like a man, who went travelling into a distant country, delivering his property in trust to his servants.—After these interesting parables Jesus communicates his disciples what he would do as soon as he sat on the throne; he would, namely, separate the sheep (believers) from the goats (unbelievers) and then the king (that is himself (for in 34 he styles himself the king) would say to the sheep on his right hand. "You blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom;" but to the goats on his left hand he would say: "Go away to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And those would go to everlasting torture, and the others to everlasting bliss. We may regret that this king never sat on the throne, as all the unbelievers would have been consecrated to the fire, and the dear, meek sheep would have been rid of them, without being any more annoyed by their mockery, and would have inherited the most blissful kingdom on earth.

CHAPTER XXVI.—Upon concluding his remarks, Jesus informed his disciples that after two days, the feast of Passover would take place, and that he was betrayed to be crucified.—It seems that Jesus was informed by his friends, that somebody (as we know, Judas Iscariot) had compact with the authorities of Jerusalem to deliver him in their power for a certain compensation. That Jesus would however have known that he should be crucified is not likely, for then he would either have fled, or otherwise, have given himself up, in case he wished to be treated in that way, which neither he did. He only will have known, that in case the authorities would succeed in catching him, they should crucify him as was done with all rioters; but since Jesus had a great faction on his side he will not have supposed that the authorities should succeed, and consequently, he will not have valued the betrayal very dangerous.—Jesus soon after the foregoing, made up his mind to return to Jerusalem; the Chief-priests and authorities in the meantime deliberated on the manner, in which they would cause his arrest, for they dared not to do so publicly for fear of disturbance and riot. While now Jesus was with his disciples at dinner in Bethany, and explained to them that a woman, who had poured upon him a jug of precious oil, had performed a very worthy deed, one of the twelve named Judas Iscariot, stole away, and went to the Chief priest, asking him how much money they should give for delivering Jesus. They said thirty pieces of silver. With this Judas was satisfied.—We learn there from by what sort of disciples Jesus was accompanied.

When now the first day of the unleavened bread was there, the disciples came to Jesus, asking: "Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?" and he said: "Go into the city to such a man, and say the Master saith: my time is at hand, I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples."—This saying of Jesus, so greatly admired by the Christians, only proves

that the person, to whom the message was sent, was an acquaintance, who knew about his projects ; and he let him know that the time had arrived to put them into execution.—And as the evening was come, Jesus sat down with the twelve, and while they took their supper, he said : “ Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me ;” and at the same time he intimated who the betrayer was.—This is mentioned as proof of the omniscience of Jesus, but it is much more natural to suppose, since Jesus had quite a number of followers, that one of them may have detected Iscariot, or heard of his last interview with Caiaphas, the chief priest, and have reported it to Jesus ; Jerusalem being only a small city, it would even have been strange if gossip had been ignorant of it.—Jesus now declared that the son of man was to go, as was written, but woe to the betrayer ; it would have been good for that man if he had not been born.—This statement ought never to have been uttered by the Son of God, for though it is true that many persons are living of whom might be said that they had better not been born ; still, since such people do exist with every generation, this would go far to show that the Supreme Being has a different way of viewing this matter than the public has ; and Jesus claiming to be the Son of God, ought therefore, as an obedient son, not to have made a public statement of his entertaining a different opinion on so important a subject. We might also remember, that as the largest portion of mankind are doomed to fire everlasting by Jesus’ doctrine, Judas, by becoming unfaithful to him, could expect nothing worse than to share in the fate of those millions of sufferers, hence that it was as well for him to have been born, as it was for the largest portion of mankind ; he was only one more coal in the fire, and it would not burn less brisk for that.—And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said : “ Take, eat, this is my body ;” and he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying : “ Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”—What Jesus meant by this declaration is not easily to understand. The Christians, however, understand it thoroughly, it seems, seeing that they discovered, and proved, as many explanations thereon as there are Christian sects. It is, though, not certain Jesus understood it himself, since a person of sense cannot understand sayings without sense. No one will contend on good ground that the sayings of “ eat, this is my body,” giving a piece of bread to eat, and also “ drink, this is my blood” passing a cup of wine, are not unmitigated nonsense. It even might be said that it has all the appearance of being pronounced by one who did not know what he said ; by one, for instance, who, during a supper, had kept a large cup of wine for himself, a cup large enough to serve for the whole company. And when a son of man, sitting at table, unexpectedly receives intelligence of the defeat of all his plans, of which he entertained the brightest visions of prospective brilliancy, why should he then not, in such an oppressive moment, drown his sorrows in a brim-full cup of wine ? And would it be suprising that, if at the close of the meal, such one comes to speechifying, his address should partake

somewhat of the sublime ridiculous? It is not at all unreasonable to suppose that Jesus had done full honor to the cup, since he immediately launches forth into a speech, stating his regret that he shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, but trusts to drink it again with his disciples when in his kingdom (v. 29). The disciples must also have generously imbibed on that occasion, for we will see that sleep became to them irresistible, though they were aware of the danger of their master. . Jesus, namely, while at table, receiving intelligence that the servants of the law were searching for him, will have understood that his sitting so long at table with his disciples might be the cause of his being taken, so that the food and drink they had used could cost him body and blood. This cogitation may have excited him (excited as he already was) into the exclamation of "This is my body and this is my blood." And as Jesus in that moment seems to have entertained the idea of fighting for his life, so he could have spoken of blood that should be shed. His blood was, however, not shed in the sense as generally understood under that term, for then a man ought to fall by the sword, while Jesus was merely nailed through his hands, and by such operation not much blood is shed. That Jesus should have said that this shedding of blood was for the remission of sins of many, is too preposterous to admit of this, as everybody, even with the slightest particle of sense left, must know that the blood of a person cannot be of use in the expiation of the sins of another. The only effect which the shedding of innocent blood could have upon others, would be the falling back of the crime upon those who did commit the murder. If, therefore, Jesus was put to death unjustly, the only effect therefrom, supposing God to be just, would have been the punishment of the real murderers, in proportion to the magnitude of the crime, but never could it tend to the remission of sins in others, who were not connected with the case in the least. One must have lost all sense of right and justice to think otherwise. There are, furthermore, no proofs whatever of the truth of Matthew's version of this affair; and it should be remarked, that the other Evangelists report the words of Jesus somewhat differently, each in his own way; so Matthew, too, will have reported them as seemed to him the most useful.

After the supper, Jesus with his disciples went to the Mount of Olives.—This was at some distance from the city, evidently Jesus did not like to be seized too soon, and since on Mount Olive there was some shrubbery, it afforded good opportunities for concealment. If Jesus could only elude the pursuit during this night, he would be temporarily out of danger, since at other times he was considered safe enough, owing to the mob that was on his side. But now it was passover, and the people were feasting and eating in their houses, forgetting Jesus altogether; they only listened to him, as it seems, when they had nothing better to do.—Jesus then said to those who were with him, that all would be offended because of him that night, but after he had risen he would go before them into Galilee.—It is evident that Jesus intended to go back fast to Galilee, and that he intended to rise early before his sleepy disciples. It would be much easier for him to escape alone than surrounded by such a parcel of blockheads. The

rising mentioned by Jesus, is explained by the Christians as alluding to his resurrection, but they forget, that after the resurrection he went, as they say, to heaven, but not into Galilee; there is no doubt, therefore, that he only spoke of rising up in the common sense.—Peter thought fit to give him the assurance, though all men might be offended, yet he would not, but Jesus returned him the assurance, that, before the crowing of the cock, Peter would deny him thrice.—The Christians admire this as a prophecy in Jesus; we, however, think that it should be understood differently, since in that way it contains no right answer to the assurance of Peter that he should not be offended, for if Peter was to deny, without reason given thereto, then he (Peter) should be the offender, while Jesus meant that he (Jesus) should be the offender. That is, Jesus intended to flee before the cock would crow, and leave his disciples alone. They, on waking up and not finding him, would be offended, and Peter would deny him emphatically.—From the Mount Olive they went to a place called Gethsemane; Jesus then told his disciples to sit down, taking three of them aside, and he began to be sorrowful and very heavy; he wished them to tarry and watch, while he would go a little farther to pray.—The time was approaching that Jesus should be put to death for the remission of the sins of mankind, according to the Christian belief, he now, in his double capacity of Son of God and Son of Man, instead of being sorrowful and heavy, should, we think, have felt light and joyful; as for the comparatively little pain he would have to endure, the amplest compensation would be found in the eternal well-being of thousands of millions of his fellow-creatures. Whatever human nature may be, and however depraved it be, still it may be supposed that many could be found, who, if they had full and positive conviction of saving all mankind from eternal torture and damnation by getting their hands pierced through, would submit to the pain of it, not only without sorrow but cheerfully and gloriously. But Jesus, the great Son of God, who, immediately after the execution, could go to the celestial paradise, was nevertheless greatly depressed with the prospect of meeting bodily pain; this is strange indeed.—When left alone, Jesus fell on his face, and prayed that this cup might pass from him.—This prayer would not prove for the truth of one of his previous assertions, that God had given him full power in heaven as well as on earth; it would even prove that his power was nothing compared to that of the great Creator. Matthew does not mention, whether Jesus, with his face on the ground, was listening if anyone was approaching; in that position, as is well known, he might have detected the coming of his pursuers much more readily than while standing or sitting.—After remaining in that posture for some time, Jesus got up to wake his disciples; as many as three times did he have to do it, but each time they fell asleep again, till at last on the third time, while doing so, he found himself already surrounded by the servants of the law, who came to arrest him.—We learn from this how heavy the sleep of the disciples, after the supper, must have been, not to be able, even at such a time of danger, to overcome their animal nature, and to submit to sleep. That Jesus did not flee

when he heard the soldiers coming forward, may be thrown in as proof of his voluntarily surrendering himself. Those that think so, would, however, do well to mark that Jesus was at that time in a garden, which probably was hedged in, and that the guards of the high priest will have taken possession of the gates, and have surrounded the garden, so that Jesus was caught as in a cage, and could have no other escape than to force himself through the enemy at the head of his disciples when attacked.—Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, who had made the agreement with the elders to procure them Jesus without strife of riot, gave, when approaching, Jesus a kiss, as a signal for the soldiers that he was the man they were looking for. Jesus asked him sweetly : “ Friend, wherefore art thou come ? ” But lo, instead of receiving answer of that friend, the soldiers came forth and arrested him without ceremony. One of Jesus’ disciples drawing his sword, smote off the ear of one of the guards. Jesus thereupon ordered his disciples to put up their swords, “ for all they that took the sword should perish by the sword.” This of course meant to say that the force against them was too strong to admit of a successful resistance, so that it was better to give up that idea.—It may be presumed that this was a general order against the use of swords ; but this could not well be the case, as in chapter X Jesus taught that he was come not to bring peace, but the sword among mankind.—The Christians, also, in strict obedience to this injunction, have constantly made use of the sword, and experience has never manifested that he who took up the sword always perished by the sword. There is no doubt, therefore, that Jesus only gave that order specially to his disciples, in view of the circumstance in which they were placed.—While then Jesus was hand-cuffed by the soldiers, he asserted that he could easily get twelve legions of angels for his defence, if he wished.—That this was braggadocio of the most preposterous description, will need no comment, for he had even not been able to obtain what he so ardently prayed for (that the cup might pass from him) ; and how, then, could he expect that the Father, upon his simple requisition, would have sent twelve legions of angels to march against his enemies. Twelve legions would make an army of seventy two thousand angels (a legion numbering six thousand) ; his boasting was thus on a large scale ; as a single angel, for (instance cherubim with his flaming sword), would have been a match for all the soldiers of the high priest and elders, even the whole board of elders included. It has, moreover, never appeared that there are so many angels in heaven, for since the times of old nothing has ever been seen or heard of them, and even their place of residence has never been discovered by any one, notwithstanding our powerful telescopes ; we fear thus that there exist not so many angels as Jesus wished to march out.—Jesus thereupon addressing the men, asked why they came with swords and staves, as if he were a thief, while they laid no hold on him while he was teaching in the temple. But all this was done, he said, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled (v. 56).—The most diligent search in the bible will, not lead us to the discovery of any prophecy to the effect that a son of the Most High should ever be seized and treated like a makebate, as was the case with

Jesus. This question of him was moreover quite unnecessary, as he must have been fully aware, that so long as he was surrounded by a rabble, that could only look with favor on his teachings (regarding the garment, and the cloak, and the money-reaping without sowing, &c.,) that it was not well possible or judicious for a comparatively small number of servants of the law to lay hold on him.—The disciples now perceiving their master in custody forsook him and fled. The soldiers then led him away to Caiaphas, the high-priest, where the scribes and elders were assembled. They sought witnesses against him for they wished to put him to death, but found none. At last they found two witnesses, whom Matthew calls ‘false witnesses,’ though they only stated (which was true) that Jesus had said to be able to destroy the temple and build it up again in three days (this he said, vide John II. 19). And the high-priest asked him what he had to answer hereupon, but Jesus held his peace; whereupon the high priest said: “I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus did not pause a moment to swear this, answering. “Thou hast said! Yet I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (v. 64.)—It may sound harsh to the ears of his meek and lowly followers, to say that Jesus swore falsely; it must though be acknowledged that he told a most deliberate and barefaced falsehood, for neither Caiaphas, nor any of the scribes and elders, nor any one else, ever saw him sitting on the right hand of Power, coming on the clouds of heaven. As it is impossible for a son of man to sit on clouds, this of itself should be enough to brand his statement as a falsehood. Jesus probably intended to frighten his assembled judges; he had till now, been quite successful in imposing upon his simple minded followers and thought of putting again a bold face upon the matter, but this time he did not succeed.—The judges assembled, judged him guilty of death for blasphemy.—It may be alleged that this sentence was unjust, but the laws of Moses inflicted capital punishment on blasphemy. And the statement of Jesus must have appeared most horribly blasphemous to orthodox Jews, for it implied that their great Jehovah, too sacred to be beheld by the eye of man, whom even Moses was not allowed to see in all his glory, should have a son of woman born.—Peter sat during the judgment within the palace, and a damsel said to him: “Thou wast also with Jesus of Galilee,” but he denied it, and when he was out in the porch (it appears he was gradually moving away) another maid said unto them that were there: “This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth;” but Peter stoutly denied it; a third time it was mentioned to him again, but by denying, swearing, and saying: “I know not the man,” he managed to get out; immediately thereupon the cock crew, and he remembered the words spoken to him, and wept bitterly.—The denial of Peter was not very honorable to be sure, but was so far excusable, as he might otherwise have shared the fate of his master and its disagreeable consequences, while when free, he might set to work to effect his release. The crowing of a cock is not so very remarkable, as there must have been more than one in Jerusalem, and since they frequently crow, he may have had a good opportunity

to hear one of them. It was also not surprising that Peter wept ; for Jesus had often promised to be soon with his disciples in his kingdom (the kingdom of David), sitting at the festive board, drinking wine with them ; while now, from what Peter saw and heard, he could easily anticipate, that instead of feasting, the king of the Jews would die an ignominious death, exposed to the ridicule of the Scribes and Pharisees, and of all the people who had heard his boastings.

CHAPTER XXVII.—When the morning was come, all the chief-priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate (the Roman governor, without whose consent no one could be put to death). Judas Iscariot in the meantime repented himself over his betrayal, and returning the thirty pieces of silver, hanged himself. The chief-priests, considered it unlawful to put that money into the treasury as being the price of blood, and therefore appropriated it to the purchase of the potter's field for a burial-ground for strangers. This was according to Matthew in fulfilment of the prophecy by Jeremiah.—That prophecy is there not to be found, only something about thirty pieces of money may be read in Zachariah XI ; but as prophecy in this instance it can not well be admitted, as we demonstrated at that place.—The governor then, put the question to Jesus, if he was the king of the Jews, which Jesus affirmed ; the chief-priests and elders now put in their accusations, which elicited no answer from him, for he probably understood, that accusations on matters of Jewish religion before a pagan judge would not receive much consideration.—Pilate after that interrogatory did not see much harm in Jesus, and wished to see him at liberty. Whereas now on the feast of the Passover, the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner whom they chose, the governor asked those who were gathered together, “whom will ye that I release unto you? Barrabas or Jesus?” Barrabas was another prisoner ; and the people, instigated by the chief-priests and elders, claimed his release. Pilate at a loss what to do, surrendered Jesus for sentence to the Jewish authorities.—Pilate, as is evident, favored the release of Jesus for some reason or another ; as a Roman officer he should however not so easily have cleared of blame a person, who proclaimed himself king in a country subject to Roman sway ; such offence being punishable with death. He must also have known that he acted against the intentions of his government. for he surrendered Jesus to the Jews because he feared that they should report his conduct in this matter to his government at Rome.—According to custom, Jesus was first scourged and then delivered to be crucified ; the soldiers of the governor, thereupon, took him into the common hall, where they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe ; they also put a crown of thorn-branches upon his head, and gave him a reed in his hand, and saluted him, mockingly, as king of the Jews. After having amused themselves in that way, and after having punched him sufficiently, they took the robe off from him, and led him away to be crucified. On the way

they compelled a man named Simon of Cirene to bear the cross, as Jesus himself appears to have been tired.—Those soldiers therefore seem not to have been so cruel towards him as Matthew represents.—On coming to Golgatha, they gave Jesus vinegar to drink mingled with gall, and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.—Matthew would make it appear, as if that mixture was given him to mock or irritate him, while it was simply in pursuance of custom to give a doomed man, previous to barbarous execution, a draught, intoxicating or stunning the senses, so as to lessen his shrieks, which could not sound pleasant to the bystanders. That the draught was not as Matthew states, would appear from the other Evangelists, who give it a different name. But Matthew, no doubt, calls it so, because David once complaining of his enemies, says : “ And they gave me vinegar mingled with gall.” Matthew now probably speaks of this beverage, that it might pass for a prophecy on Jesus.—They then crucified him, and the soldiers parted his garments and cast lots for them, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet.—The so-called prophecy may be found in Psalm XXII, where David, under the name ‘garments,’ speaks of his cities, which the enemies divided amongst themselves. Yet, Matthew might have known, that the clothes of every condemned to death were handed to the executioner according to custom ; so that there was nothing unusual in this dividing of garments.—Over the head of Jesus was put a board, whereupon was written : “ This is Jesus the king of the Jews.” —That superscription was undoubtedly a cutting ridicule of all the braggadocio Jesus had indulged in ; for there he was, nailed to a piece of wood, the great man, who had said to be the powerful king and hero, whose coming among the children of Israel had been foretold for centuries, and who would be the terror of uncircumcised and heathens of all sort ; there he was, the mighty king, who proposed establishing a heavenly kingdom in Judea, after burning in fire all those, who did not follow him ; there now he was, powerless, notwithstanding his assertion that he could call forth twelve legions of angels to do his bidding ; yet, not one could he get to free him from the wooden cross. What the cause was of his hanging on the cross is by a careful perusal of the history not difficult to perceive ; his proud, defiant, sedicious, and blasphemous language, and the barefaced falsehoods, wherewith he sought to promote his ambitious plans, explain it plainly ; also we see here the proverb verified : Evil breeds evil.—The high priests, scribes and elders came now to mock Jesus. They advised him to show his power as son of God, by coming off the cross. —Matthew highly disapproves the treatment of those people, and no doubt it is far from generous to ridicule another’s misfortune and suffering, but Jesus had so often promised woe to them, that they could scarcely forego the opportunity of taking revenge ; and yet the advice they gave him was a good one, which he might have followed ; if this son of God had come off the cross, he would not only have silenced his enemies, but they even would have believed in his claim, and then, if after such a performance, he still preferred to hang on the cross for the benefit of mankind ; he could, in his established almightiness, hook himself on to it again ; the power however, was not there to follow this sensible advice.—Matthew further informs us, that there was

darkness over all the land from the sixth to the ninth hour.—This proves not much as there is often darkness on a cloudy day.—About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice: “Eli, eli, lama Sabachthani,” that is to say, according to Matthew, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?—This exclamation of Jesus shows, that though he was a God himself, and though full power in heaven and on earth was given to him, he still was utterly powerless without the aid of God. It was furthermore not christianly in Jesus to suppose, that God would be so unjust as to forsake any one; and he also should have remembered that he was hung to secure bliss everlasting to a portion of mankind, and torture everlasting to a far greater portion of unbelievers. This blissful thought should have strengthened him and have filled his whole soul with such heavenly joy, as to render him quite insensible to mere bodily pain... That ‘Eli’ translated means ‘My God,’ we learn from Matthew. The bystanders, though acquainted with the Hebrew, their mother tongue, understood him to call for Elias.—And straightway one of the soldiers ran, and taking a sponge filled with vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink. Jesus then, crying once more with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.—The man, who gave him the drink was perhaps named Elias; and the dying of Jesus soon after the drink would only lead to suspect that something, having similar properties to chloroform for making people appear as dead, was given to him by this soldier, bought by Jesus’ friends. We may presume such with the more certainty on account that a young man like Jesus was, will not die from getting his hands pierced with nails.—And behold the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose.—That the vail of the temple was rent in twain, was a great miracle no doubt, but not certain whether it was performed under influence of higher agency, or simply by a mortal who was paid for doing it. That the graves were opened, and that sundry resurrections took place is not mentioned by any of the other Evangelists; if this actually happened, no doubt can exist but they would have mentioned it. Neither does any other cotemporary writer mention anything of this resurrection, nor do we learn what they did those bodies when returned to life, and what became of them afterwards, nothing of it we learn except just the above communication of Matthew. It would however not have been wise of those people to select for their resurrection the very day on which the son of God intended to go to Paradise and spend there a couple of days; they should have remained there in order to be present on this great and joyful occasion. For those reasons we suspect that Matthew was mistaken, and that not one of the dead saints had the least thought of resuscitating on that day.—And when the evening was come, a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, a disciple of Jesus, went to Pilatus and begged the body of Jesus, which was delivered to him; and it was then wrapped in clean linen and laid in Joseph’s own new tomb, and a great stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre.—That Pilate allowed Joseph of Arimathea to take the body away, was very kind in him, though not exactly according to usage, as the punishment of those crucified was to have the

bones broken, this being the capital punishment; the suspension on a cross being merely for the purpose of exhibition. According to Mark, Pilate was very astonished to learn that Jesus was dead, but it is a matter of course, that in common courtesy the rich Joseph of Arimathea, could not be made to wait until the punishment was completed. It was decidedly fortunate for Jesus to have such influential friends; his body could now be properly cared for, without having the bones crushed, and it could be laid in a new tomb properly prepared for the occasion. It was dark evening when Jesus' body was carried there, and it remains, consequently, unknown if the body had fully the appearance of a corpse, or that, as it was intended for immediate resurrection, the appearance may not have been fully so. We may surmise that Jesus was carefully taken from the cross by one of the soldiers of Pilate, perhaps the same who relieved him with the marvellous drink while on the cross, and we therefore trust that the rich Joseph will have magnanimously rewarded that gallant man.—On the next day the high-priests and Pharisees came to Pilate to request that the sepulchre might be guarded, as the deceiver (meaning Jesus) had said that after three days he would rise from the dead; they feared that the disciples might steal his body, and claim the prophecy of resurrection to have been fulfilled. Pilate told them they had a watch, and they could make it as sure as they pleased.—The chief priests and elders knew, as it seems, the zeal of the disciples of Jesus, and to have discovered that in order to propagate their blissful creed, they did not scruple to resort to some little holy tricks.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn, toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. And behold there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.—These are the words of Matthew; the whole tenor of his book shows that he was a friend of the miraculous; but Mark, who was less partial to it, simply relates that when those women went to the sepulchre with spices, very early in the morning, they found the stone rolled from the door, and a young man with a long white robe sitting there; Jesus was not there.—The words of Mark bear the mark of truth more than those of Matthew, for a young man in a white robe need not be an angel, and as angels are never seen to descend from heaven, it is much safer to believe that it was a young man. That Joseph of Arimathea may have arranged, with one or two of his servants, to get up a ghost affair, in order to scare away those engaged in guarding the sepulchre, would not be improbable, for he knowing that Jesus wanted to get out of the sepulchre, must have whetted his brains to imagine some means to get the watchmen out of the way, and it appears to have succeeded very well. How, too, should men sitting round the sepulchre of an enchanter (as they deemed him to be) not be scared out of their wits and run for their lives by seeing in the midst of the night one or two mysterious white things advancing upon them. The watchmen having

run off, Jesus could quietly step out of his grave.—Matthew continues that the women did not find Jesus, but the angel kindly told them that Jesus was risen from the dead, and was on his way to Galilee; they should quickly go and tell the disciples of it.—Matthew forcibly intimated in v. 1-3 that the women were present at the descent of the angel, but now in v. 6 he, forgetting what he had said, relates that Jesus was already gone when they arrived; accordingly they could not have seen the angel rolling back the stone. This is another reason why Mark should be believed in this respect in preference to Matthew. It is also remarkable that those women should not have been frightened seeing an angel, whose countenance was like lightning, and should not have run off, but have stood listening to his words, and that without fainting. Really this is surprising.—On their way to tell the disciples, they met Jesus and fell at his feet, worshipping him; he told them to go and tell the brethren to go into Galilee, where they would see him.—No doubt the freshness of his wounds caused Jesus to desire rest, in preference to seeing his friends, and this will have been the reason why he sent the women away so soon. The angel, though, had been mistaken by telling that Jesus was gone up to Galilee, while he was yet near by.

The eleven disciples went into Galilee accordingly, on a mountain, where Jesus had appointed to meet them. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus spoke to them, saying: "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth; go, ye therefore, and teach all nations; baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."—These words of Jesus sound truly divine; we may be permitted to observe, nevertheless, that of his power on earth, not much substantial was seen; and that of his power in heaven (consisting, as we know, in the command of twelve legions of angels, besides all the saints) he did not prove to know how to make use of it. . . The commandment, that all nations should be baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was rather strange; for, though the baptism with water may have the effect of cleaning the body externally, yet the evil that is within cannot be reached by such process, and the mere pronouncing of the three mentioned names can, in fact, effect still less than the water, since they merely penetrate the ear without expelling any evil or doing any good. The only advantage that might perhaps be derived from that ceremony, would be, in case the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost should feel flattered by such appeals to them, and on account thereof should annihilate the records, against the persons thus baptized, from the big book of sin-accounts. If these three gods are vain enough to do this, which seems to be the case, then only can baptism be of service to the Christian. Besides baptising, the disciples were to teach all round all that Jesus ordered them to observe. As we have shown before, such a course could only lead to confusion worse confounded; yea, the strict observance of his doctrines by all the nations of the earth, could only end in their perishing in poverty and misery. And as for Jesus' promise, that

he would be with his disciples even unto the end of the world, in this the holy son of the Lord was not true, seeing that according to Mark and Luke, Jesus ascended to heaven shortly after his resurrection, leaving all his disciples behind. Also not one of the later followers, or disciples of Jesus, ever had the pleasure of his personal acquaintance ; instead, then, of being with his disciples to the end of the world, he has obstinately persisted, now already for more than eighteen hundred years, in continually disappointing his elected people, those god-minded, holy-hearted pious Christians, who all were baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but without ever deriving any perceptible benefit from it.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK.

Seeing that we have treated the history of Jesus pretty thoroughly in the book of Matthew, we shall not repeat here the same accounts. The narrative as given by Mark accords tolerably well with that of Matthew, save some slight differences.—Mark does not give any account of Jesus' birth, but introduces him forthwith as being baptised by John the Baptist, while a voice came from heaven, saying : "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—By this short but practical account, Jesus is at once introduced as a son of God, so that the reader has not to ponder upon the miraculous manner in which he was born, but may believe him, if he chooses to do so, as come down from heaven.—In his last chapter, Mark gives the account of Jesus' resurrection. He speaks, however, not of an angel coming down from heaven to open the sepulchre, but merely says, that a young man, clothed in a long white garment, was sitting in the sepulchre when the women came thither to anoint the body. Now, as a young man in a white garment, is not always an angel, so Mark, without burdening his conscience with a lie, left it to the choice of the reader to believe the young man either an angel, or a human being, clothed in white. — After his resurrection, Jesus appeared unto some of his followers, says Mark, and also unto the eleven disciples, as they sat at meat, and he said unto them : "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature ; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. And this sign shall follow them that believe in my name, they shall cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues," etc. (v. 15–17). So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he (Jesus) was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God (v. 19).—While now Matthew would make it appear as if Jesus remained forever on earth to comfort his followers, Mark, on the contrary, let him go to heaven and sit on the right hand of God. And Mark let him go to heaven,

while the disciples sat at meat; this account does, therefore, not well agree with the general belief in Jesus' ascent from the top of a mount. Yet, since Mark does not say in what manner Jesus went to heaven, and since we discovered that Mark does not like to tell too big lies, we guess his meaning to be, that the soul of Jesus went up to heaven, but not his body, that is to say, that Jesus died. The idea of Jesus' bodily ascent seems to be taken from the account of Luke; but is it not worthy of notice, that Matthew and John, who both belonged to the eleven disciples who were said to be present at the said ascension, don't speak at all of that incident, while Mark and Luke, who did not belong to those eleven narrate it? If Jesus had actually been taken up bodily, we may be quite certain that Matthew and John would not have forgotten to relate this circumstance. However, how it may be, we see, at all events, that Jesus was taken away from this earthly life, and also are informed that the last solemn words of the great Saviour were a damnation to all those that do not believe in him.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.

This gospel was originally a letter of Luke to his pupil and friend, the most excellent Theophilus. Luke describes therein the history of Jesus, according to what he had heard (not according to what he had seen). He first expatiates on the history of John the Baptist, but as we do not see that John the Baptist has much to do with the Christian creed, we shall leave that account alone. Further, we are informed that it came to pass in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (Elizabeth, the mother of John, was a cousin to Mary), that the angel Gabriel appeared unto Mary in Nazareth, then engaged to be married to Joseph, who was of the house of David. The angel having blessed her, told her that she would conceive in her womb, and bring forth a son, and call his name Jesus, and he should be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God should give him the throne of his father David, and he should reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there should be no end. Mary hearing this was quite astonished, for she said, she knew no man. The angel thereupon declared that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and therefore the holy thing that should be born by her, should be called the Son of God.—This is the account as given by Luke concerning the origin of Jesus. We, however, do not see since the child was procreated by the Holy Ghost, that he could therefore be called the Son of God; but leaving this question to be explained by the learned Christian theologians, we merely have to observe that the angel told a lie as to the reign of Jesus, for Jesus never has set on the throne of David, and never has reigned over the house of Jacob. If it could be said that

he had reigned at all, it should be that his 'name' has governed the mind of European nations, and their American descendents, but not of the house of Jacob, seeing that Jews have never believed in him. And the messenger Gabriel spoke to Mary of the holy thing that should be born by her, but we, unbelieving as we are, cannot see how, by any means, he could call the production of a woman, who being a human creature, must necessarily be more or less sinful, a holy thing. Viewing this bastard production in its most favorable light, it only could be half holy and half human, thus anyhow no more than a demi-god.—Mary made, however, no remarks, and submissive as she was, she contented herself to say: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."—It seems that Mary thought that she had to obey every command of her Lord, even immoral commands; she was though mistaken, for immoral commands ought not to be obeyed; besides, the 'Jus primæ noctis' did not exist among the Jews.—And so it happened, that after due course of time, the child Jesus was born. The birth took place in a stable in Bethlehem, while Mary was on a journey, accompanied by Joseph, to whom she was still betrothed. Why Joseph, who must have known that Mary was soon to be confined, did not procure her a more suitable lying in room than a mule-stable, we do not understand. It is true that the story goes that there was no other place in the inn, but why then, had he not left his espoused wife in Jerusalem, which city was only two hours walk from Bethlehem, and through which they must have passed, since they came from the North. Besides, a city of some extent is much more preferable for an unmarried girl, that is to be confined, than a small village, where usually every one meddles with other people's business. But it seems it was the will of God that the child should be born in Bethlehem, and nowhere else, and therefore very likely God caused Cesar Augustus to proclaim the queer order to every inhabitant of the world, to go to the city or town of his ancestors to be taxed; as if the people could not be taxed elsewhere, and as if every one would know in what place his ancestor resided. Yet, it may be that Joseph was careless on the affair of Mary's confinement, for he will have thought, and with right too, that if the Holy Ghost made Mary with child, the Holy Ghost might as well take care for the babe himself, and did not want to push off all consequences on him; for the Holy Ghost was mighty enough to attend to his own business.—The birth of the bastard-child was accompanied with a most miraculous circumstance, for behold, an angel of the Lord came down from heaven to communicate the happy event to a few shepherds in the country, saying that unto them was born a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord, and he also sang a song for them, by which he promised peace on earth.—We leave that song of the lively angel for what it is worth, for his promise of peace on earth was never fulfilled, and only wonder why the Lord, or the Holy Ghost, who sent that messenger, did not rather send him with the communication to Jerusalem, and the principal cities of Judea, as nobody would then have doubted the high origin of that child.—Luke narrates some incidents connected with Jesus' youth, as, for instance, once when he was twelve years old, his parents went up to Jerusalem to feast the

passover, taking Jesus with them. After the feast they travelled back to Nazareth, but after three days journey they discovered that Jesus had not returned with them. They then travelled back again, and behold, coming in the temple, they found Jesus still there (thus six days he had been there), discussing theological questions with the doctors. His mother said unto him: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."—Mary, as it appears, forgot that Joseph was not the child's father.—Jesus, however, being a wise child, knew better who his father was, for he answered: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

After that we are informed that Jesus, when he was thirty years of age, went up to John the Baptist to be baptized by him, but John refused at first to do so, yet as Jesus insisted, he at last did it, and behold, while Jesus was baptised, the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in a bodily shape like a dove (Chap. 111).—We ask ourselves, why can it be that the mighty Holy Ghost took the bodily shape of a dove, since he would have made much more favorable appearance in the shape of a seductive young man or angel. The only reason, for his taking the shape of a dove, we know of, is because Moses said the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; now, we also know that the dove of Noah was flying over the face of the waters, this circumstance, thus, of the Spirit moving in the same element as the dove, must have given a connecting idea of the Holy Spirit resembling somewhat a dove. The Spirit now, in order not to exact too much of the simple mind of the baptizing folks, will have metamorphosed himself in accordance with their notion.—Lukes gives us thereupon the pedigree of Joseph, the father of Jesus, even as far back as to Adam, evidently on purpose to show Jesus' descent from David; but he forgets thereby entirely that Jesus was not the son of Joseph, but was the son of the Holy Ghost. Besides, the pedigree which he gives does not correspond in the least to the one of Joseph given by Matthew. So that either St. Luke or St. Matthew must have given a forged one. But, because it is not agreeable to be obliged to accuse these saints of forgery, the good theologists have thought fit to explain that one pedigree was intended for Joseph, the other for Mary, notwithstanding that there is plainly spoken of Joseph, and that Mary's name is not mentioned at all. But they say Mary too, was of David's house, because Joseph belonged to it, and the Jews were obliged to marry their nearest relation. This pretension is, however, a big falsehood, whereas the Mosaical law only prescribe such marriage in case an only daughter was left heir of the family estate, or inheritance, like Moses calls it; but since Joseph and Mary were both poor, and lived without the country of Judea, there can be here, of course, no question of an inheritance. That Joseph was of David's house is, moreover, not yet so very certain, for if one pedigree is wrong, they both may be wrong; and even with accepting one or both, who, then, will lay down the proof that none of Joseph's many fore-mothers has been guilty of adultery? for if Mary, the saint mother of the Christian God, was guilty thereof, how much the more could that have been the case with less saint women. At all events, Joseph did live outside the land of Judea. in a

country inhabited by Samaritans, so that he may just as well have been a Samaritan himself.—We will not rehearse all the stories already narrated by Matthew and Mark, and shall therefore not proceed any further with Luke; also it should be painful for the pious people to be made attend on several contradictions in regard to time and place, where the miracles occurred, compared with the preceding gospels. We merely will quote one fact to show Jesus peculiar way of living; in Chapt. VIII. we see that Jesus was accompanied of his twelve disciples, and besides them of certain women, who had been healed of evil spirits, and of infirmities; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many other women who ministered unto him of their substance. In Chapt. XIV : 26, we hear him command his followers, peremptorily, to hate their father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, and also their own life, for who did not do so could not be his disciple. Now probably in accordance with that sublime doctrine, he had taught the mentioned Joanna to hate her husband and children and follow him.—At last we are informed of Jesus painful death and of his resurrection. We find here that after his resurrection he went up to Bethany, and there, was carried up to heaven while blessing his disciples. According to that information of Luke (to be found in Luke XXIV.) this carrying up to heaven occurred on the very same day of his resurrection. This is particularly to be observed from v. 13, 29, 33, 36, 50 and 51. Strange now, that according to Matthew he remained on earth for ever, and went to Galilee after his resurrection. According to Mark he went up to heaven, after some days, and this occurred, as it seems, in Jerusalem; while again Luke lets him be carried up to heaven, immediately after his resurrection, and in Bethany. Those contradictions do not speak for the truth of these so-called holy gospels.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN.

CHAPTER I.—John commences his gospel book under great exhibition of learning; a pity though that this learning is so exceedingly great, that it sounds quite uncomprehensible; thus we read: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God; and the Word was God... The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made, that was made. In him was life, and life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not, etc.—Seeing that the darkness does not understand the shining light; it is no wonder we do not understand John. Even his shining light seems very dark to us. It is said that with the expression of "Word" John designated Jesus of Nazareth;

this is also evident from v. 14; but why John invented this singular name of *Word* for the holy Son of God, is not plain. Jesus had already plenty of names; for the pious Christians have at all times evinced their affection for their gracious Lord, by inventing for him all sorts of endearing names; not one of those is however less to the point, seeing that the noun *Word* is not at all applicable to any living being. John might therefore be said to have resorted to nonsense. Yet, it is not clear by what authority John asserts that the Word (Jesus) was with God in the commencement, since Moses the historian of the Creation makes not the slightest mention of it. And since Jesus was born of a woman after the world had existed several thousand years, John's assertion is even conspicuously false.—John continues this chapter in the same learned strain, and in the meanwhile refers to John the Baptist, who should have stated that Jesus existed *before* him.—We know from the other books of the gospel that John the Baptist spoke of some one who would come *after* him, not *before* him; but even if the Baptist had said so, it would be no authority, since John the baptist does not belong to that corps of bible-writers, called saints, who never said a falsehood.—We further learn that John the baptist was not the prophesied Elias.—John should however have borne in mind what Jesus himself said on the subject, (Matthew XI. v. 14.) and thus not have contradicted him.—We also are informed that John the baptist, on seeing Jesus approaching, said: “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the Sin of the world.”—This again is another appellation of the meek Lord Jesus; how however John came upon the idea of bestowing the name of *lamb*, upon the powerful son of God, who could bind the devil, and cast millions of souls in hell-fire, is inexplicable; he showed indeed, by giving that name, to have entertained but little respect for the great Jesus. It may be said, that the name was only in reference to the death of Jesus in remission of sins, like a lamb of a sin-offering would die, but the cases are not parallel, for the lamb was given by the Jews as a present to their God; the smell of the frying meat was supposed to reach his nostrils, and please as a sweet savour, and this would render him inclined to forgiveness. The crucifixion of Jesus now was neither accompanied of an ascension of sweet savour; nor was it intended as a present to God, for the Jewish authorities only considered him a criminal, of whom they wished to rid themselves the sooner the better. Jesus cannot therefore be said to have been sacrificed as a lamb. It can besides not be admitted, that God would forgive sins to men, because they crucified Jesus, for, if Jesus was innocent like the Christians pretend, God's wrath must have been kindled the more on seeing to what atrocities mankind was apt. The only real reason which may have induced John to insert this appellation of lamb of God, must be in order to apply verse 7, of Isaiah LIII as a prophecy on Jesus.

John's account of the joining, as disciples, of Andrew and of Simon Peter differs greatly from that given by Matthew and Mark. He also informs us how Jesus procured other disciples and how quickly he converted Nathaniel, and promised that they should see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and do-

scending upon the Son of Man.—We never read of the disciples seeing anything of the kind, not even when Jesus was made a prisoner, and would greatly have welcomed a legion of angels to set him free.

CHAPTER II.—And on the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, (probably the third day after the remarkable conversion of Nathaniel.) Jesus, his mother and disciples were guests. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus said unto him : They have no wine ; Jesus said unto her, (very respectfully indeed ;) “ Woman, what have I to do with thee ? ” He ordered nevertheless six water-pots of stone to be filled with water, and when the manager of the feast tasted it, it was excellent wine. “ This was the beginning of miracles, by which Jesus manifested his glory. ” —It is undeniable that the science to change water into excellent wine was a very wonderful one, and might be very profitable besides, but it is strange that the spirit of God, should manifest itself by such a miracle, it being more like the trick for a wine-bibber than work for a prophet. This would appear the more so, as the guests had already disposed of all the wine intended for them, and according to the statement of the manager of the feast, they had already well drunk (v. 10). Jesus however thought fit to treat them to six pots more, each containing three firkins (27 gallons) a piece ; he evidently intended to bring the people in good spirit.—However as this drunken miracle cannot be the work of Divine Power, John ought never have adduced it in evidence of the Divine mission of Jesus.—Jesus then went with his disciples to Capernaum, where they only remained a few days, for the Jewish passover was near ; and he then went on to Jerusalem.—It is strange that John’s statement differs so entirely with those of the three other evangelists ; according to them Jesus, instead of going to Jerusalem, spent most of the time as wandering prophet in the country surrounding the lake of Galilee, and only proceeded to Jerusalem a very short time previous to his crucifixion. John prefers to have Jesus in Jerusalem at once ; he also has Jesus drive the merchants from the temple with a scourge of small chords, which according to the other writers is only one of the last acts of Jesus. And of his being tempted by the Devil, John does not speak at all.—The Jews came and required a sign. According to the other writers, Jesus declined giving one, but from John we learn, that Jesus said : “ Destroy the temple, and in three days I will raise it up. ” —He was no doubt shrewd enough to know, that the people would not destroy the temple in a hurry ; his promise could therefore be no inconvenience to him. John claims this saying of Jesus to allude to his own body ; yet this cannot be considered correct in the first place not, because the body of Jesus was never entirely destroyed or broken by the Jews, and in the second place, because he did not raise up his body in three days, it was after one day and two nights, that he was raised up, and that not by himself, but by an angel.

CHAPTER III.—John relates how Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews came to Jesus by night, to be instructed by him ; Jesus told him, that except a man be

born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus did not quite understand this, Jesus then told him, that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and the wind bloweth where it liketh, and so is every one that is born of the Spirit (v. 5-8). Nicodemus then appears to have been fully enlightened on the affairs of regeneration.—Jesus also informed Nicodemus, that no man had ascended to heaven, but he that came down from heaven (v. 13).—Jesus evidently did not believe in the Scriptures himself, as it mentions the ascension of Enoch, Moses, Elias and others, all born of women.—Nicodemus learned furthermore on that occasion, that the Son of Man would be lifted up as the serpent was lifted up, by Moses, in the wilderness.—This is quite correct, for the serpent was fixed on a pole, and the fate of Jesus was similar: it is strange though, that the holy son of God could forget himself so far, as to compare himself to a serpent, a creeping, cold-blooded animal, and a synonym of Satan.—God had, he said further, sent his only-begotten son, that whosoever believed in him might have everlasting life; but who did not believe in his name, was already condemned.—According to this, it is evident, that the only, begotten Son came not at all for the benefit of mankind, but chiefly, came for their damnation; for all the generations before him and those generations after, who lived without the knowledge of him and accordingly could not have believed in him, were going to hell in compliance with his doctrine; yet they are far larger in number than those that believe. The world contains about twelve hundred millions of inhabitants, and only two hundred and fifty millions profess to be Christians. And as of every thirty men one dies each year, more than thirty millions not Christians are thrown in hell every year by that great Saviour; he therefore had better done to stay away.—The saying here of only-begotten son is again a new appellation. God had however begotten several more sons as is to be seen from Genesis VI., the appellation is therefore not a good one.—After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and was baptized; and John (the baptist) was baptizing in Enon, for he was not yet cast into prison (v. 24).—We learnt however from Mark I: 14, that Jesus first came into Galilee; *after* that John was put in prison, while we find him here leaving Galilee, and John still free.

CHAPTER IV.—When Jesus learned that he had more followers than John the Baptist, and that the Pharisees were aware of this, he left Jerusalem and returned to Galilee.—We will not admit for once, that Jesus feared the Pharisees, as it is not likely that the son of the Almighty was afraid of any man.—He arrived in a town of Samaria, called Sichar, near the land which Jacob had given to his son Joseph.—How the occupants knew where this land (of which we never heard) was located, remains to be explained, as no surveys nor maps existed.—Jesus sat down near the well of Jacob, when a Samaritan woman came to get water; Jesus addressed her saying: "Give me to drink!" The woman quite surprised, asked him: "How is it, that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria." Jesus then told her that he was somebody of importance, and if she knew him, she would know that he could give her living

water; that answer of course excited the woman's curiosity greatly, thus she asked him how he could produce that living water; whereupon he informed her, that whosoever should drink of 'that living water would never thirst again, but to those it would be like a well of water springing up into everlasting. The woman on hearing this was very anxious to have some of that marvellous water, as it would save her, she said, the trouble to draw at the well. But Jesus instead of giving her of his living water, as the woman hoped he would, told her to call her husband. The women then acknowledged, that the man with whom she lived was not her husband; and Jesus said he knew she had had five husbands. The woman now at once perceived that he was a prophet, and immediately made it known in the town. This interview near the well, and the learned discourse the holy Jesus held there with the unehaste woman, brought a great many Samaritans to believe in him as the Christ, the Saviour of the world.—What great results small things may have!—

CHAPTER V.—Jesus now went to Jerusalem, and behold, near the city was a pool, which was troubled in a certain season by an angel; and whoever first plunged in was healed of whatever debility or disease he might have.—As all the sick were not healed by the process, it may be supposed that the Lord had selected that day for his amusement in witnessing the plunging match. It must have been quite an exhibition to see so many diseased persons, standing around a pool, all ready to jump in at the risk of breaking their bones. Such sport was worthy of a God, and it is to be regretted, that no description whatever of that remarkable bathing-establishment was ever found by any Jew or Gentile historian.—When Jesus came there, he saw a man, who, for thirty-eight years had tried to jump in first, but he had not been able to do so.—If that man had only thought of going into the water one moment before it was troubled by the angel, he would undoubtedly have been first; but, it may be supposed that he did not think of it, or perhaps the angel ordered every body out before stirring up the water.—Jesus took compassion on the man, and saying: "Take up thy bed and walk," the man was healed at once. The Jews were displeased on the performance as being made on a Sabbath-day, and also, because Jesus stated that God was his Father. Jesus troubled himself not at all about the displeasure of the Jews, and teased them still more by his braggadocio about his own eminence, even stating himself to be somewhat greater than God; he said: "The Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoreth not the Father... Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that shall hear shall live," (v. 22-26).—The foregoing words of Jesus fully show that he made himself greater than God; the entire Chapter is a fair specimen of outrageous boastfulness, as verily, will require no comment. It may be said, that such a powerful personage had a right to talk in that manner; but we may be allowed to observe, that a great man, who constantly talks about his own great-

ness ceases to be a great man and must be considered an idle boaster.—Jesus referred to the writings of Moses in proof of what he advanced; we are however unable to find in the writings of that demagogue anything which in the least refers to Jesus.—But that Moses had written about him, Jesus himself states, and says whoever believes in Moses, also believes in me (v. 46, 47). The Jews, however, who believe in Moses, never believed that statement.

CHAPTER VI.—We are here informed that Jesus was in the country, near the lake of Galilee.—How this sudden reappearance thither came about is not mentioned by John.—Jesus performed the well-known bread miracle on that occasion; in the evening alone, he left, for Capernaum, but the people followed; not so much, as Jesus states, because they saw the miracles, but in view of getting another meal without pay (v. 26). Jesus, of course, perceived this at once, and therefore he gave them nothing to eat, but only some good advice, as that they should not labor for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life; assuring them that he was the bread of life. The people, however, do not seem to have looked upon him as a very useful bread of life, for Jesus had to repeat it more than once, to impress it upon them.—His further remarks on the subject are too great cant to have originated in the brain of a sound person, what have we to think of such language as of v. 55, 56: "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. And the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." . . . After talking in this learned strain, he concluded with asserting that it is the spirit that quickeneth, but the flesh profiteth nothing (v. 63).—Jesus forgot that he just a moment before stated that the eating of his flesh would lead to life forever, which would prove that all flesh is not profitless after all.

As this chapter contains some of the principal points of doctrine and dispute among the Christians, not at all mentioned by the other Evangelists, we are inclined to suppose that the book of John was written at a later period, when disputes on theological points were of daily occurrence.

CHAPTER VII.—After these things, Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him.—It is evident that Jesus did not like at all to be killed, but as his death by violence, according to his teaching, was for the eternal salvation of his followers, he should have felt delighted that the Jews intended to accommodate him in that affair, and instead of running away, he should have gone to meet them. How brilliantly would, in such event, his disinterestedness have shone forth. Besides this, he ought to have remembered that he taught his disciples not to be afraid of them that kill the body (Luke XII: 4).—The brothers of Jesus taunted him with his apprehension: For neither did his brethren believe in him (v. 3-5).—This it must be acknowledged is not in favor of the perfection and divine power of Jesus, for his brothers, who had been acquainted with him from boy-

hood up, should first of all have been convinced of his extraordinary qualities.—Jesus told his brothers that he would not go to Jerusalem, as his time had not yet come; but they might go there; and when they had left for Jerusalem, he went up also, not openly, but in secret (v. 10).—This shows how dexterously the excellent Son of God knew to use a little falsehood, if it suited his purpose; this was very Christian-like indeed: for the Christian creed consist entirely of falsehood.—On his arrival at Jerusalem, Jesus proceeded at once to the temple to teach the community, and here, without the slightest provocation, he suddenly exclaimed: “Why go ye about to kill me?” the people answered: “thou hast the devil; who goeth to kill thee?” He then proceeded to talk about circumcision, which was not well connected with what preceded, though very instructive.—A few days later, Jesus stated to the servants of the high-priest that he would not be long among them, but would return to him who had sent him, and they would seek him and find him not.—This was evidently intended as a special puzzle for the servants of the high priest. Those servants, however, found him afterwards when he was wanted, and kept good hold of him, for they nailed him to the wood; after that time it is not likely that they sought him any more.—In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood up and cried saying: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (v. 37, 38).—It may be a very pleasant thing to have rivers of living water flowing out of the belly, but it may be questioned whether the Jews understood the meaning of those sublime words. St. John, however, understood it, for he states that it had reference to the Holy Ghost. . . . We though, did not know that the Holy Ghost flows out of the belly.—Many among the multitude on hearing Jesus, said: “Of a truth, this is a prophet.”—It is evident, therefore, that according to the opinion of St. John, it was sufficient to utter unintelligible language, to be proclaimed a prophet.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman taken in the act of adultery, asking him, with the object of tempting him, whether she should be stoned, according to the commandment of Moses, or not. Jesus then stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. When they persisted asking him, he replied at last: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Jesus thereupon stooped down again and resumed his writing on the ground. The accusers now left one by one, leaving the woman behind. And Jesus said: “I do not condemn thee; go and sin no more.”—This episode is alluded to as a great proof of fine feeling and generosity in Jesus, as if any common man would not equally feel bound to save one of God’s creatures from mob violence, the more if, as in this case, a few words would suffice to do so. But apart from this, it may be presumed that this tale is not fully in accordance with truth; in the first place, because it speaks of Jesus writing on the ground, while Jesus never in his life wrote anything;

and in the second place, it is not probable that the enemies of Jesus, on passing sentence, would have troubled themselves about his opinion or approval; or could have been put to the blush so as to withdraw in the sneaking manner as reported, because Jesus suspected their own chastity. Besides, Moses had never commanded that the persons who were to do the stoning should be without sin themselves.—The meek and lowly Jesus then addressed the multitude (it seems they had returned) saying: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The Pharisees not inclined to be put out by high-sounding language, answered: "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true;" but Jesus replied, that the testimony of two men was true, according to the law, and he was one that bore witness of himself, and the Father that sent him beareth witness of him so that there were two witnesses.—The heavenly Father was thus called by Jesus a man, as he speaks of the testimony of two men (v. 17, 18). His assertion can, however, not be admitted; for in the first place, was his testimony not of value; as no person can be witness in his own case; and in the second place, the Father never stated that Jesus was the light of the world. Besides this, Jesus had stated in Chapt. V: 31, that if he bore witness of himself, his witness was not true.—The Pharisees, therefore, had a perfect right not to believe in the glory Jesus attributed to himself; even, their own eyes would have shown them that Jesus was not connected with the light of the world.—Jesus spoke a great deal more about his intimacy with the Father, and when he had finished, a great many believed in him.—From this it would appear that notwithstanding the aversion John seems to entertain for the Jews, still many of them were blessed with an easy belief, which is the most praiseworthy quality of the Christians.—Jesus furthermore communicated to his audience, that if God were their Father, they would love him (Jesus), for he proceeded forth from God; they might know it from his speech, but because they could not do that, therefore they were of their father the Devil. The Jews were much annoyed by this address and stated, that Abraham was their father, but Jesus was a Samaritan. Jesus retorted, that he was instead of that much greater than Abraham, for he had existed before Abraham was born. The Jews disliking this remark, took up stones to cast at him, but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.—The almighty Son of God had to sneak away from a few infuriated Jews.

CHAPTER IX.—And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from his birth, and his disciples asked him, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind. Jesus answered, that neither the man nor his parents had sinned, but it was in order that the works of God should be made manifest in him; he then spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man therewith, saying: "Go wash in the pool of Si-

loam," which the man did, and came out seeing.—The almighty 'Light of the World' would, in our humble opinion, have acted much more effectually by simply ordering him to see, instead of rubbing a blind man's face with his spittle.—In consequence of this miracle, the priests cast the healed out of the synagogue, on the plea that he was a humbug. Jesus on seeing the man again, comforted him by stating that he (the Light of the World) was come into this world in order that they that are blind might see, and they that see might be made blind.—His object was accordingly to do more harm than good.

CHAPTER X.—Jesus now commenced to speak in parables, asserting that, "he that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."—We discover thereby that the meek Lord Jesus was rather sweeping in his assertion, for if the door of the sheep-fold, by some toward circumstance, would not open, the shepherd himself would be obliged to climb in. It does not imply, therefore, that the person who gains admittance in some other way, is necessarily a thief.—The humble Lord Jesus explains himself thereupon somewhat in his own fashion, by stating: "I am the door (v. 9); I am the good shepherd (v. 11 and 14); I and my Father are one" (v. 30)—In this strain is the whole address; the only object of which seems to have been the most fulsome self-adulation.—Jesus asserted besides, that he could lay down his life of his own free will, and had power to take it again (v. 17–18).—But we learn in Luke XXII, that Jesus was in intense agony, sweating blood, when they laid hold on him to pass and execute sentence upon him, which circumstance would not at all agree with his boasting

CHAPTER XI.—Jesus then went into Bethany, where he restored Lazarus to life, after the man had been dead four days.—We gave our opinion about the resuscitation to life in our comment on Matthew IX. It is remarkable nevertheless, that not one of the other Evangelists makes the slightest mention of this great miracle, and that the book of John, which agrees in almost nothing with the three other books of the gospel, only mentions it.—Before Jesus performed the miracle he groaned and wept; but as he knew that he could easily restore Lazarus to life, we perceive no occasion for his weeping and groaning, and deem it could only be humbug. Such hypocrisy was, however, not becoming to the Son of the Lord, as all kind of hypocrisy is always contemptible. The chief-priests and and Pharisees, on hearing of the miracle, greatly feared that all men would believe in him, and that the Romans would come and take away both place and nation. They consequently took counsel, and resolved to put him to death. Jesus, therefore, walked no more openly among the Jews (v. 54).—John construed always all the words and actions of Jesus as having only a religious tendency; but he mentions now something about the Romans, who would come and take away both place and nation, which statement fully shows that he was

aware that a political purpose was concealed in Jesus' teachings, for the Romans would have taken no notice whatever of any religious movement, as long as it had nothing to do with politics, as religion of all kind was free with them. Persecution for the sake of religion was not known among them, and has but commenced in the Christian ages. It must be remembered that the Romans were, in Jesus' time, the rulers of Palestine, so that their laws were in force.

CHAPTER XII.—Jesus remained a few days in Bethany with Lazarus, but towards the time of the passover, he went up to Jerusalem. This he did riding on an ass's colt, and the people seeing him, went out before him, crying : "Hozanna : Blessed is the king of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord."—The account of this glorious triumphal entry, whereby some friends of Jesus shouted Hozanna, we read already of ; but then it was stated that Jesus came from Galilee (not from Bethany), and entered Jerusalem for the first time since his being prophet. In that case, the prophecy mentioned in v. 15 of this Chapter, would apply better than it does here, for in order to say, "Fear not, daughter of Zion ; behold thy king cometh, sitting on an ass's colt," it would be understood that the king should come for the first time. But as according to John, Jesus had been in the city already several times, and only on this occasion thought fit to ride on an ass's colt, the said prophecy cannot very well apply to him ; it could apply with equal correctness to any one who chose to enter Jerusalem on an ass's colt's back. That Jesus never was king of the daughter of Zion (Jerusalem), and that the shouting was accordingly a mistake, will certainly require no demonstration.—Certain Greeks, who happened to be in Jerusalem, expressed a desire to see him ; they being brought before Jesus, he gave them to understand that the hour was come when the Son of Man should be glorified (v. 23).—Jesus was certainly in error this time, for instead of being glorified like a king, he was hung on a cross like a criminal, which was not very glorious.—Jesus thereupon made a speech in the street, and while he spoke, a voice came from heaven, saying : "I have glorified, and will glorify him again." The people that stood by heard however not the voice, but heard a clap of thunder.—What a pity that they could not hear any more of it, for if the voice could have been distinctly understood, how much more to the purpose would it not have been ; for, as far as Jesus was concerned, the message was quite unnecessary, since he was fully convinced that his glorification was beyond doubt.—Notwithstanding now these encouraging words which Jesus had just heard from heaven, he proved on a sudden to be afraid of being seized by his enemies, for he stopped short in his address, departed, and did hide himself from them (v. 36.)

CHAPTER XIII.—And on the night before the feast of the passover, when Jesus and his disciples had taken their supper, he rose and laid aside his garments,

and took a towel and girded himself ; after that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.—This extraordinary performance of Jesus is highly praised by the Christians, as proof of his humility ; but as the operation was entirely useless in itself, the disciples being very well able to wash their own feet, it might be presumed that Jesus had some other object in view, as for, instance, he could have assumed the disguise of a servant, to delude the soldiers into the belief that he was not the person they sought. — About what was further spoken by Jesus, verily, verily, we spoke of it in Matthew ; it has only to be remarked, that he pretended (v. 34) to have invented a new commandment, to wit : “ to love one another.”—We cannot appreciate the novelty of that commandment, for it is as old as the world ; without that first of all natural precepts, mankind could have had no existence, but would have destroyed itself from the first. Also no religion was ever without that commandment. Moses, the founder of the otherwise not very amiable Israelite creed, teaches, “ Love thy neighbor.” Confucius, and Zoroaster, and Buddha, the founders of the Asiatic religions, as also Socrates, and a great many other philosophers of the Greek, they all announced the same commandment, though they existed long before Jesus. There was, accordingly, no novelty in it ; besides this, Jesus forgot to recollect, that he had preached more than once, that in order to be a good Christian, people should hate one another, nay, even their nearest family relations (Luke XIV : 26), he therefore ought not to have given here a commandment so contradictory with it.

CHAPTER XIV.—Jesus proceeding in his discourse, made a few remarks in self-laudation, principally touching the intimacy that existed between the Father and himself. The disciple Philip naively said to him : “ Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” but Jesus asked him in reply : “ Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known him Philip ? he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, show us the Father ? I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.”—Though this saying is monstrously nonsensical, seeing that two individuals cannot possess one body, still it is evident that it served to state that Jesus was fully equal to the father, not only in a spiritual, but also in any other sense. He asserted the same in Chapt. X : 30 ; but Jesus forgot that he was born of a woman, and accordingly was, at the most, but a demi-god, while the Father was wholly a God ; it will require, therefore, no demonstration that those sayings were braggadocio of the worst kind, worse than that of any other prophet that ever walked in Israel. Moses, it is true, talked also supremely about his intimacy with the Lord, and the great power conferred upon him, even styling himself an angel of the Lord, but never had he the impudence to call himself an equal to God ; probably he will not have supposed the people could ever be so exceedingly stupid as to believe in such stories. Jesus, however, proved to know mankind better than Moses did, for he evidently knew that in religious matters the stupidity of the people knows no limit, and that even the greater absurdity, the more readily it is believed in and

the more tenaciously defended by the faithful. Yet in v. 28 of this Chapter, the mighty son of God contradicts himself by testifying that the Father is greater than he, which does not precisely harmonize with his previous boastings.—John relates some more speeches of Jesus spoken on this occasion, whereby he stated that he would send a Comforter.—Perusing the books of the other Evangelists, we find in them that Jesus promised the Comforter to his disciples, by his taking leave of them, after his resurrection, but we do not discover that he spoke of it on his last supper. Moreover we do not discover there that he was at all so communicative on that occasion as John would make it appear, but on the contrary, discover him to be full of anxiety and distraction of mind.

CHAPTER XV.—Jesus spoke still more, saying that he was the vine, and his father was the husbandman;—he forgot that he had stated before that he and his father were one; and there is a difference between a husbandman and a vine.—He also told his disciples that they were the branches, and they were clean through the word which he had spoken to them.—According to this theory, the disciple Iscariot must have been as clean as the others.—In v. 22 we find that Jesus, speaking of those who persecuted him, said, that if he had not spoken to them, they would have had no sin, but they had now no cloak for their sin.—The great son of God contradicted himself pretty often; from this again, it would appear, that in order to be clean from sin, the safest way was to keep away from him, the Saviour.—Jesus further complained, that the people hated him without cause.—But if we remember how this self-loving son of God invariably answered those who asked him questions, by calling them names (Generation of vipers, Hypocrites, Fools, Adulterers, Devourers of widows, Children of father the Devil), really then we cannot say that the Pharisees and others hated him without cause, as it would be rather trying to love him under such circumstances.

CHAPTER XVI.—Jesus proceeds with an elegant, but somewhat unintelligible speech, concerning his Comforter and so forth; and he does, as I verily, verily say unto you, not omit to laud his own power and perfection to the skies. The speech is for the rest only cant, in our opinion, but if any one wish to admire that piece of Christian eloquence, we wish him joy.

CHAPTER XVII.—Jesus concluded with a prayer, asking from the Father to be glorified.—Whereas the great son was equally powerful as the Father, he should not pray to be glorified; besides, we learned in Chapter XII, that he was already glorified.—This touching prayer will pay the trouble of a perusal, as a specimen of outrageous self-laudation; Jesus only talks therein about the great things he has achieved. He further prays that his disciples may always be with him, in order to witness his glory, for God loved him even before the foundation of the world.—That love was certainly of great antiquity, and it is to be regretted that it manifested itself in so strange a manner, by causing his dear son to be nailed

to the wood ; even the disciples, during the entire period of their existence, never appear to have caught a glimpse of Jesus glorification.

CHAPTER XVIII.—After closing his eloquent speech, Jesus left with his disciples, and proceeded over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into which they entered. Jesus hoped probably not to be found in such remote a garden ; but unfortunately Judas Iscariot knew the hiding place and betrayed it to the chief-priests, who immediately sent a band of men thither with lanterns, torches and weapons, accompanied by Judas as guide, to secure him. On seeing them approach, Jesus went towards them (according to John), asking : “ Whom seek ye ? ” They answered : Jesus of Nazareth ; he said : “ I am he.” And as soon as he had said those words they all went backwards and fell to the ground.—How powerful must have been the effect of Jesus’ voice ! It is remarkable however, that the other evangelists, who did certainly all they could to show the wonderful powers of Jesus to the advantage, make no mention whatever of this miraculous event, but only state, that Judas kissed his master to designate to the soldiers the person they sought. The soldiers in garrison at Jerusalem were Romans, who probably cared very little about Jewish religious matters ; the Roman soldiers were moreover hardened in the field of battle, and will consequently not have been so susceptible as to make a single word of a Jewish prophet sufficient to cause them to faint. But the holy John says so, and because he is called a Saint evangelist we must believe it ; likewise as we must believe that Jesus surrendered himself voluntarily. That he went during the night to a garden at some remote distance, was, we suppose, to give the soldiers an opportunity for a walk in the refreshing evening air.—The party getting on their feet again, seized Jesus, who patiently had waited till they recovered from their fainting fit, and they bound him with ropes. They then took him to the house of the high-priest Caiaphas ; here a preliminary examination took place, and after this he was taken to the judgment hall. It was at the house of Caiaphas that Peter denied his master just three times before the cock crew.—In all probability this must have been the cock in Caiaphas’ chicken-coop, who was moved by the spirit to crow.—On the next morning Pilate the governor, came in the judgment hall to investigate the matter. Pilate did not quite understand, or perhaps he would not understand, what the matter was ; he merely used his best efforts to get Jesus free, but when he perceived, that the Jewish authorities suspected him (probably of conspiring with the party of Jesus,) he delivered him up to the authorities, to be dealt with as they thought proper.

CHAPTER XIX.—Pilate made another effort in favor of Jesus when he heard of his sentence, but the authorities remarked to him, that to set a man free who proclaimed himself king of the Jews, would be high treason to the Emperor, whom they would notify of this if necessary ; and that threat had the effect that Pilate desisted making further objections. He only wrote a title to be put on the cross, to wit : Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. The authorities

who had repeatedly declared to have nothing to do with this king, and to desire no other than Cesar, were not much pleased with that superscription, as it had the appearance as if the Jewish nation had considered Jesus as their king. They wished to alter it, but Pilate declined making any alterations, probably because he understood that by so doing he could appropriate to himself the merit of having inflicted capital punishment on the chief of rebellious Jews, and thus redeem the blame of his prior equivocal behaviour.—After having been suspended for some hours on the cross Jesus called out : “ I thirst.” Hereupon one of the soldiers reached up a sponge with hyssop and put it to his mouth ; after this Jesus called : “ It is finished,” and gave up the ghost. The two criminals, who had been crucified at the same time had not expired ; the soldiers therefore came up and broke their bones, (which was according to the usual execution) but Jesus’ bones were not broken ; a soldier merely pierced his side with a spear and forthwith came thereout blood and water.—This perhaps must serve as a proof, that he was actually dead, though it does not prove anything, since even by a dead body no water will run out of a wound in the side.—Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two Jews of note, requested Pilate to allow them to take the body of Jesus off the cross, which was granted ; they did so accordingly, wound it in linen clothing and laid it in a new sepulchre.—We mentioned this circumstance while commenting on Matthew XXVII, and already observed then that there exist no evidence that Jesus was actually dead, since a man does not die of having his hands pierced by nails, it is true that John adds to the story his being pierced in his side with a spear, but this too is not a deadly wound when given on the right hand side. The words spoken on the cross are reported very differently here from what they are in other books of the gospel.

CHAPTER XX.—We then read of the visit of Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre, where she found the large stone, which covered the entrance, removed. This account as furnished by John differs greatly from that by the other writers. We find now only one woman coming to the Sepulchre, while all the other Evangelists speak of more than one ; yet we find here two angels instead of one.—Mary finding the Sepulchre empty, sat down and wept, but once looking up she saw a man standing before her ; this man was Jesus, but she did not recognize him, and supposed him to be the gardener.—The clothing of Jesus having been divided among his executioners, it may be surmised that Jesus made his appearance in a new suit, hence perhaps the difficulty in recognizing him. But stranger it is that she would inquire of the gardener where the body of Jesus was, while she according to John saw two angels in white, seated in the sepulchre, and she ought to have understood that the gardener would not have dared to remove the body in the presence of such formidable guardians. It is also strange that the sight of those rare beings did not disconcert her in the least . . . at any rate she did not faint at the sight of angels in sheets, and probably mistook them for ordinary mortals.—The discon-

solate Mary was soon overjoyed at the meeting when Jesus made himself known; but Jesus was less joyful and told her not to touch him, for, said he, he was not yet ascended to his Father.—Which answer no doubt was only a pretext to get rid of her embraces, for, if he really had ascended, how would Mary by any possibility have touched him? The reason of it was probably the pain in his hands and in his side, which would not allow him to submit to an embrace.—Mary left by order of Jesus and told the disciples of her adventure. And it came to pass on the same day at evening, when the disciples were assembled and the doors were shut, that Jesus suddenly appeared in the midst of them. And he breathed on the astonished disciples, saying: “Receive ye the holy ghost!”—The holy ghost though does not seem to have come, for we learn afterwards that it made its appearance some ten days later. The sudden appearance of Jesus in a house whereof the doors were shut, is not so miraculous perhaps as it may seem, for the landlord who must necessarily have been friendly to the cause, may easily have concealed Jesus in his house during the day, without the disciples being informed of it.—The disciple Thomas was the only one of the eleven not present on the occasion, and when he was informed of the occurrence, he declined believing, until he should have seen with his own eyes the prints of the nails and have put his finger into it and have examined his side. Jesus who seems to have been loth to lose Thomas as a disciple returned eight days afterwards to convince Thomas, and with entire success this was accomplished.—This act of Jesus is again a proof, that he was the worthy son of his sire, for we perceive that he too, even as the old Lord, had his favorites from whom he could suffer more than from other people. The old Lord had his friends the patriarchs and Moses and Aaron, who might commit the most unlawful acts, while others for far less grave misdemeanors were visited by pestilences or fiery serpents; now, of the same disposition was Jesus; he was ready to excuse his disciples when they disbelieved, though they had witnessed his miracles and glorifications, while others, who never witnessed anything of the kind, and consequently had pretty good reason not to believe, were damned by him to damnation everlasting, in a pit of fire with gnashing of teeth. From this it will appear, that Father and Son both entertained on equal notion of justice, thereby proving to possess the same family-disposition.

CHAPTER XXI.—Although Jesus, according to Mark ascended to heaven on the day of his resurrection, John relates of his occupations on earth for some short time after that occurrence. Thus we read, that a few days after the conversion of Thomas the unbeliever, Jesus suddenly made his appearance near the sea of Galilee, where his disciples were fishing, and surprised them with a most tremendous haul of fish; yea 153 large fishes were caught, and the net was not broken. Bread was soon provided for, and so they all set down to a meal, consisting of bread and fried fish!—We certainly do not consider it a crime in Jesus to eat bread, but only consider it an inconsistency, since he had pledged himself at

his last supper to eat no bread and drink no wine until he should be in his kingdom; and the shores of the lake of Galilee though, no doubt, classic ground, were no heavenly kingdom. It is true that John makes no mention whatever of this pledge; probably thinking it unnecessary, as Jesus did not act accordingly. —Neither mentions John the important ascension to heaven; but for the other evangelists, we would have been in the most deplorable ignorance concerning the last on earth of the great Saviour.—John, relating a few more incidents of minor importance, concludes his narrative with this chapter, declaring his testimony to be true, and assuring us, that if all things which Jesus did should be written, he supposes that even the world itself could not contain the books that were to be written. Amen!—John's knowledge of the size of the earth seems to have been limited; the world we think is sufficiently large and the prophet's career of Jesus sufficiently short, to afford occasion for such library. We therefore suspect John of exaggeration in his statement; but as exaggeration (as can be seen from the books of the prophets) is the privilege of holy inspired men, it seems to be the quality, *par excellence*, of the holy Spirit, and as St. John's statement so abundantly savors of exaggeration, we dare say that he, though not a prophet in this instance, must have been brimfull of the holy Spirit when he wrote his testimony, which he himself says to be true.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

BY

LUKE.

CHAPTER I.—From a review of the four gospels, it appears, that Jesus' prophet's career was but for a very limited period. The preaching of his doctrine therefore devolved principally upon his disciples. Their acts are described by Luke. He designates these chosen few no longer by the humble appellation of disciples (for with such learning as they then possessed, they were of course entitled to something more), but calls them Apostles.

Those apostles then after the disappearance of Jesus returned from Mount Olivet to Jerusalem, where they met in perfect harmony, in prayer and in supplication. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the congregation and made a speech (that we might call elegant,) inserting a few prophecies much to the point, and proposing the election of another apostle in the place of Judas the traitor; whom he said, had fallen headlong and burst asunder. Two were put in nomination, and after drawing lots, the balloting resulted in favor of Matthew, who was unanimously elected to be the twelfth apostle.

CHAPTER II.—And when the day of the Pentecost was fully come, all the followers of Jesus were with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the holy ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance. —On former occasions we read of great men who received the holy spirit, but never then was it accompanied by phenomena so miraculous. What may have been the cause of the sound and of the tongues of fire, and of the language of the apostles, we are unable to say; the cause could however not have been a holy one, or the consequences should have been holy also; and we shall show that such was not the case.—Peter rose to deliver an address. On taking the trouble to peruse the address, and the prophecies inserted, it will be perceived at a glance, that Peter strove to mislead his audience. He quotes for instance a prophecy of Joel, stating, that in the last days God would pour out of his spirit upon all flesh, and that prophecy according to him referred to the event just witnessed; but as we know, this event did not happen in the last days, since the world still exists. Peter also prophesied that the sun would at the same time be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood. That nothing of the kind happened it is needless to say; his prophecy was therefore utterly false. He also quotes (in v. 25) a psalm of David, when that royal poet speaks of Jehovah; now he deceitfully puts this forth as a prophecy of Jesus; his other quotations are equally far fetched. After having scared his audience with many quotations of fearful avengement to come, he adds to it, that the whole house of Israel will have the responsibility of the crucifixion of the Christ, and in order they may avoid the consequences, he exhorts them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. We perceive from the above, that Peter sought to make proselytes for the church of Christ by deceit and by terrifying them; this now was the effect of the at present received holy spirit. Now as such effect is unworthy of a gift of God, we should suppose, that the said spirit can not have been of divine origin, but rather think that the most intimate friends of the Son of man understood a trick, by which the room in which the audience were assembled was filled with some spirituous gas, the inhaling of which brought those present into a state of excitement, on account of which they gave utterance to incoherent language, that Luke thinks fit to call strange tongues.—Many inquisitive ones came to witness the performance and some said “those men are full of new wine;” this would show at all events that the strange tongues of the inspired men was not very intelligible; (what such language was may also be perceived from 1 Cor. XIV: 19, 23.) If it should be supposed that the persons, who made the statement, (that these men were full of wine) did so out of prejudice against the Apostles, we have the declaration of Luke himself, (v. 5 and 6 of this chapter) that all these witnesses were “devout men.”—

Many were converted on that occasion and afterwards; and all that believed remained together, and had all things in common. And they sold their possession and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they,

continuing daily with one accord in the temple; and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."—We perceive how blissful was the first time of the Christians; most blissful for lazy people! Those who had nothing to lose, could make out to best advantage, and those who did have something to lose, might see others share it until their all was spent, and in return therefor they were allowed to be daily with one accord in the temple, praying and thanking the Lord in their extreme singleness and gladness, which they enjoyed by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER III.—Now Peter and John went up together into temple at the hour of prayer, and they saw at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, a man who was lame, and he asked alms. The man asked them, but instead of giving him alms, they healed his lameness on the spot.—Those two apostles having been the most confidential disciples of Jesus, may be supposed to have known how to find the patients who could be healed to order.—The man followed them in the temple, walking and leaping and praising God, and all who knew the beggar were filled with wonder and amazement. The crowd that collected was at once addressed by Peter, who exhorted them in a speech to confess Jesus Christ; that their sins might be blotted out before the times of refreshing should come from the presence of the Lord.—The time of refreshing must evidently have been meant for the time of wrath. We learn how sweet the religion was they preached: A God of wrath constantly before the eye, who only forgives on condition of the belief, that Jesus the fisherman is his Son, and if any one does not believe that, God refreshes himself by cooling his wrath on such stiff-necked unbeliever.

CHAPTER IV.—The captain of the temple and the priests were grieved at the oration of Peter, and therefore put Peter and John in hold until the next day. They were then brought before the council of the chief-priest and elders, who admonished them to make no more speeches, and on condition that they should leave town, let them go. They then went to their own company. The Christians in Jerusalem numbered 5000 already. And when the congregated Christians saw them return, they commenced singing the psalm of David, where he says: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his anointed."—As if the giving of an admonition by the Jewish elders had anything in common with the words of David, where he complains that the kings conspire against him (David) the anointed of the Lord.

Luke repeats further once more the statement, that all the believers were of one heart and of one soul; and had all things in common. Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold

them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostle's feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.—This was a corporation of spendthrifts indeed; instead of praising such a state of things, Luke would have given proof of some common sense, by observing that this being of one heart and one soul could not last long, since a society which produces nothing, and maintains itself of its capital, must sooner or later have to declare its insolvency. Time, also, has shown how soon that communistic association came to an end, for though the Christian religion remained, as far as faith in a son of God is concerned, its communism soon came to a dead lock. The Christian religion of the present day is very different from that of the time of the apostles.

CHAPTER V.—But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession and kept back a part of the price, his wife also being privy to it. He brought the other part and laid it at the apostle's feet. Peter knew that this was not the whole sum, and in his Christian manner of viewing things, judged that Ananias ought to give up the whole, and not part of it. When now Ananias stood before him, Peter reproached him with lying unto God, in punishment of which Ananias fell to the ground and yielded up the ghost. Three hours afterwards Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, came and told the same as her late husband, and behold, she was served in the same manner. This occurrence created great sensation and apprehension among the faithful.—The action of Peter shows with what degree of despotism those first Christian apostles managed their community. It will not be supposed for an instant by any intelligent person that Ananias and Sapphira died by the hand of God; no one could suppose this who professes to believe in a Supreme Being of infinite justice and mercy; the money laid at Peter's feet was the property of the unfortunate couple, and they could not be compelled to give it all. Their telling a falsehood was certainly to be blamed, but not a misdemeanor to justify so terrible a visitation. Thus, if a God had a hand in that affair, we submit it to have been an evil one. We hope not that Jesus, the God of the Christians, was concerned in the transaction. . . . There are means to kill living creatures suddenly, for instance, by a shock of electricity, when strong enough. It may be asserted this is only a discovery of a much later period; this is true; but seeing that the middle ages swept almost all vestiges of ancient sciences off the earth, and that many discoveries of later date had been known before the said period of desolation, therefore it would not at all be impossible that the priests of antiquity had known how to apply electricity to their purposes. The pious Christian will say that it is not likely that St. Peter would have committed murder by any such means, but such pious ones have to remember that Peter was appointed by Jesus a fisher of men, and as a fisher has a right to kill his fishes when he deems it profitable, so Peter could do the same. . . . Peter will have discovered that he was often cheated by the new members of this communistic association, that many kept back a part of their

money, and therefore he will have resorted to some very vigorous measures, of which unfortunately Ananias and Sapphira were the victims.—And so great was the effect produced by that miracle, that of the rest of the community no man dared approach himself to the apostles, who sat with one accord in Solomon's porch. Here whole multitudes of sick were brought, and they were all healed; they laid the sick on beds and couches near by, that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow and heal them. The high-priests and those in authority, not at all convinced by this time, but very indignant because the apostles had not left town, laid their hands on them, and put them in the common prison. But lo, an angel of the Lord came by night and opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, shutting the doors again.—We are glad to hear of their delivery, but do think that the angel of the Lord would have displayed more sagacity if he had come down in broad daylight; this would have convinced the authorities of Jerusalem, without any more difficulty, that the apostles were the real men they claimed to be; while, as it was, they might suspect their deliverance to be owing to bribery of the jailor.—The apostles, on being free, at once resumed their preachings in the temple, but again were they seized and taken before the council. There it was observed to them that they had been strictly commanded not to teach in the name of Jesus, and to leave town, but they all answered that they ought to obey God rather than men.—That answer was certainly very pious, and worthy of a Christian apostle, but any fanatic could produce the same reason for his disobeying the laws of the land, if his peculiar notions of pleasing his God disagreed with those laws. By creating a disturbance in the temple, with seditious language, Peter did certainly not obey the God of that temple but his own fancy—Peter standing before the council, took occasion to address them on the subject of Christ, and did this in such a manner that they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. But a Pharisee, a member of the council, named Gamaliel, thought it bad policy to put them to death, and procured their release, after some flogging, and a peremptory command that they should not speak any more in the name of Jesus. Notwithstanding this command, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus in the temple, and in every house, says Luke.—From the remarks made by Gamaliel in his plea, it appears that in those days more pretenders to Christship had existed; for instance, one named Theudas, and one Judas; both of whose pretensions had been suppressed by means of putting them to death, and their followers had been dispersed. Jesus, on the contrary, had the good fortune of a resurrection, and of having persevering apostles; to those two circumstances may it be attributed that his followers were not so easily dispersed. Pretensions to be a Messiah, that is, a Christ, appear to have been the fashion in those days.

CHAPTER VI.—And in those days there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. The apostles then proposed to appoint seven men of honest report over

this business, as they would give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministration of the word. One of those elected was Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, who did great wonders and miracles among the people.—It is really surprising, that while so many people existed in later days, and even now-a-days, who either pretend, or think themselves conscious to be full of the holy spirit, not one could ever perform a single miracle, while in those days miracle-performing seems to have been attached to the possession of the holy spirit. It must therefore be supposed that the holy spirit was then more concentrated; there were fewer believers; but there being at present so many more, the holy spirit is spread over more surface, and each person may have a smaller portion of it; hence, probably, the effect must be less in proportion.—The miracles and the excitable preaching in the streets vexed the authorities at last to such a degree, that Stephen was sentenced by them to death, notwithstanding that he looked like an angel when he stood before the council.

CHAPTER VII.—Stephen after relating the whole history of Israel to the Council (which they must have known already), told them about Jesus, and when he came to the point of Jesus' departure, he exclaimed that he saw heaven opening, and Jesus sitting on the right side of God. He was, after that oration, led away, and stoned to death.—Stephen was accordingly the first Christian who died the death of a martyr for his faith. On perusing this and the preceding Chapter, we discover in the enthusiasm of Stephen, in his mode of fanatical speech, and in the great miracles he performed, and even in his pious looks, a very striking analogy to Jesus, and as Matthew and John, who were precisely the two Evangelists who knew Jesus intimately, make no mention of what became of him subsequent to his crucifixion, can it not therefore be possible that Jesus and Stephen be one and the same person, and that he may have assumed the latter name in order to return to Jerusalem, in spite of the authorities, so as to aid in the propagation of his creed. The two other Evangelists pretend, it is true, that Jesus ascended to heaven, but as Stephen's soul will have gone hither too, we are at liberty to suppose that Jesus was Stephen, without necessarily accusing Mark and Luke of deception.

CHAPTER VIII.—At the death of Stephen a young man named Saul was present, who seemed to take pleasure in the death of that pious man; and since the time of Stephen's death there was a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and the members thereof were scattered abroad through the regions of Judea and Samaria. Saul distinguished himself particularly in the persecution of them. After that passing notice of Saul, Luke relates that the apostle Philip did great service by performing miracles, and made numerous converts in Samaria. He also converted all the followers of the false prophet Simon, who performed wonderful things; even Simon himself was converted, because Philip

was the strongest in performing miracles ; Simon was baptized, and remained with Philip ; even he offered him money, provided Philip would show him how to lay on his hands that people might receive the holy spirit. On hearing of this, Peter grew indignant, and gave Simon a proper answer. The apostle Philip returned to Jerusalem ; on his way he met an eunuch of an Ethiopian queen, Candace, on a devotional journey to that city, reading Isaiah. Philip drew near, got into the chariot with the eunuch, and explained the words of Isaiah so dexterously as a prophecy on Jesus, that the Ethiopian ordered the chariot to stop, and at once was baptised in the river near by ; and behold, when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, who was suddenly found at Azotus, which was quite a distance off.—At any rate, Philip was not a man who lost his time.

CHAPTER IX.—And Saul, breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, applied to the high-priest for letters to Damascus, in order to bring back to Jerusalem all the runaway Christians. And as he journeyed toward Damascus, there suddenly shined about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him : “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” And Saul said : “Who art thou, Lord?” And the answer was, “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” Trembling and astonished, he asked : “Lord, what wilt thou have me do?” He was answered : “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice and seeing no man. When Saul arose he could not see, and they led him by the hand into Damascus. Three days he was there without sight, and without eating or drinking ; and there lived in that city a man named Ananias, to whom the Lord appeared, ordering him to go to Saul. Ananias first objected to go to a man so well known for his enmity towards Christians, but he was informed by Jesus, who called upon him, that Saul was a chosen vessel unto him, to whom he would show how great things he had to suffer for his sake.—One learns from this how desirable it was to be a chosen vessel unto the Lord Jesus. The miraculous apparition to Saul has been greatly admired as a proof of the omnipresence of the Son of God. It is strange, however, since Jesus took such good care to prevent Saul injuring his cause, that he in later times suffered the Christians, even those who were most devoted, to undergo all sorts of cruel treatment by all sorts of enemies, without in the least interfering in their behalf. Among the later Roman emperors, some (for instance Nero) attempted to exterminate the Christians, inflicting more injury upon them than Saul ever could have done, but Jesus did not make his appearance once. Even Mahomet, who has driven Christianity almost entirely out of Asia, was never favored by an order or an appeal from Jesus ; but as we see in securing the friendship of Saul, the mighty Jesus was less indifferent. Although now Saul and the men who were with him heard the voice and saw the light, but saw not the person from whom the voice proceeded, we are unable to say whether it was

really Jesus or some one else who spoke, for we have no proof whatever. We may as well believe that the voice proceeded from some one concealed in a hollow tree on the road, and who, for instance, at the same time, let off some fire-work in Saul's face, injuring his eyes; the person who performed this miracle could easily have understood that it was more preferable for the Christian church that the eyes of Saul were burnt than that a lot of saints be carried back to Jerusalem.—When the pious Ananias came to Saul, he recovered his sight, the scales falling of his eyes.—This is very miraculous indeed, but it is not impossible that this messenger of the Saviour inquired every day into the state of the patient, and first showed himself before him at the time that the eyelids were healed, so that on removing the bandage, Saul would perceive that he could see again.—Saul was soon converted and baptized by Ananias; he took the name of Paul, and remained some days with the disciples at Damascus; he even preached in the Synagogue and became more and more strengthened in the new faith. The Jews residing in Damascus determined upon killing him; they watched the gates day and night for that purpose, but the disciples, aware of this, let him down by the wall in a basket. On his return to Jerusalem he intended to join the followers of Jesus, but they mistrusted him, until Barnabas, who knew of his conversion, introduced him. We further learn concerning a few miracles performed by Peter, the principal one being the restoring to life of a female disciple, named Tabitha of Dorcas.—In regard to the performance of such miracles we gave our opinion while commenting on Matthew IX.

CHAPTER X.—There was a certain man in Cesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band; he was a devout man, and he saw a vision, on the ninth hour of the day, of an angel, who ordered him to send men to Jappa to call Peter to come to him. When the men drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up unto the house-top to pray, when he fell into a trance, and he saw heaven opened and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners and let down to the earth, wherein were all sorts of four footed beasts, creeping things, &c, and a voice from heaven said: "Arise Peter, kill and eat" but Peter said: "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." But the voice replied. "What God hath cleaned that call not thou common." Thrice was this repeated and the vessel was received up again into heaven. The three messengers from Cornelius then just arrived standing before the gate, Peter understood at once the mystic meaning of the vision, that he should also convert Gentiles as well as Jews. The men stated their message, and in consequence thereof Cornelius and his whole family were soon converted, and lo, while Peter spoke, the holy ghost descended upon all who were present, and they spoke in foreign tongues, praising the Lord.—This seems to have been the first conversion among the Gentiles, for in the commencement the christian creed was considered as a special blessing intended for the Jews alone, also Jesus called himself 'king of the Jews,' but not of the Gentiles. It was therefore necessary

that a miracle should take place to have it understood, that Peter did not act in this exclusively upon his own authority. The centurion here spoken of was probably the same, with whom we made acquaintance as such an extraordinary good-believer in Matthew VIII: 5 and IX: 18. At all events he proved to be a man friendly to the cause. And as for the descent of the Holy Ghost upon an assemblage of persons, we alluded to such proceedings in Chapter II of the Acts. And as for what regards the sheet full of unclean animals, which descended from heaven, this cannot be explained, than that Peter must have dreamt, even must have had the nightmare, for a sheet can never be let down from heaven, neither in reality nor in vision, since Astronomy has learnt that there is no such place above in the skies substantial enough to hold a sheet. Peter has therefore imagined to see something that is quite impossible.—

CHAPTER XI.—On his return to Jerusalem objection was raised to Peter's announcing the Gospel to the uncircumcised; but Peter expounded all he had experienced at full length, and this satisfied all the saints. The dispersion consequent upon the persecution had scattered the Christians in all directions; they preached their doctrine wherever they went, and made many converts among the Jews, principally at Antioch; and some men of Cyprus and Cyrene also preached to Grecians. And in those days christian prophets from Jerusalem came to Antioch; one of them named Agabus foretold great dearth over all the world, so that all the Antiochian saints resolved to send relief to their brethren in Judea. Barnabas and Saul were the special envoys on that occasion.—It would appear that the brethren in Judea had exhausted their joint stock capital, and that the keeping house 'all with one accord' described in Acts II: 44-47, had already experienced a severe check. The apostles and christian prophets acted very wisely to apply for relief to the brethren at Antioch, for they, having not yet lived so long with 'one accord,' must have been better provided with the necessities of life.

CHAPTER XII.—Herod, the tetrarch of Samaria, stretched forth his hands to vex certain men of the Church. James the brother of John was killed by the sword, and Peter was put in prison with four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; but prayer was made for him without ceasing, and an angel came to his relief; the chains fell off his hands; the iron gate that led into the city opened of its own accord, and Peter found himself in the street safely delivered, when the angel departed. Peter then went to the house of Mary, mother of John, whose surname was Mark. And some time after this, Herod, while sitting on his throne was smitten by the hand of the Lord, and was eaten by worms, and gave up the ghost.—What a wonderful story! Why again did not the angel who deliberated Peter, come in broad day light? The whole of Samaria, including Herod, would then have been converted at once. Why that mystery? we therefore are inclined to

believe that the whole performance was not at all supernatural, but that the keepers were bribed or made drunk. The Christians in that time were already numerous, and many among them must have been willing, with a bribe in hand, and the promise of everlasting bliss hereafter, to become jailor, and let escape the Christian prisoners. And what concerns the disgusting disease under which Herod gave up the ghost, is, though very rare, a disease which has oftener been seen ; and then, whether a person dies of a painful disease, or of a comparatively easy one, this never has proved that the person was therefore a better or more wicked man.

CHAPTER XIII.—At Antioch certain prophets were assembled, as Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Paul. The Holy Ghost said unto them : “ Separate me Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for the work whereunto I have called them.” After fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them away.—In the Old Testament we learned that the Lord spoke to the Jewish prophets, but we now learn that the Holy Ghost was on similar terms with the apostles. We are not informed whether the Holy Ghost made his appearance this time, as a man or as a pigeon, or whether he only made his voice heard from heaven. But what does this matter, it is sufficient to know that the Holy Ghost spoke.—Paul and Barnabas departed unto Seleucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus ; at Paphos they found a certain sorcerer, or false prophet, whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with Sergius, a prudent man, the deputy of the country. Sergius desired to hear Paul and Barnabas, but the sorcerer withstood them. Then Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, called him names, and immediately the sorcerer was struck with blindness. The deputy believed immediately, being somewhat scared. The travellers then started for Perga, and from there for Antioch, in Pisidia ; at the latter place Paul preached in the synagogue, reviewing the history of Israel, Jesus’ life included, with the happy result that many of the Jews believed in Jesus. The Gentiles invited Paul to preach and the result was similar. The Jews, however, were filled with envy, stirring up the devout women and the chief men of the city against them ; persecution was raised, and the travellers expelled out of their coast. Prompted by indignation, they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came into Iconium. And the disciples, that is the Christian congregation there, were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost on seeing them, and were full of joy that the apostles, by shaking off the dust, had furnished such evidence of their apostolic superiority.—According to the doctrine of Jesus, an apostle on leaving a place, where he was not well received, had to shake off the dust of his feet, and such a place would fare worse on the day of judgment than even Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew X : 14–15). Great reason to be full of joy for Christian saints.

CHAPTER XIV.—At Iconium they spoke so effectively that a great many Jews as well as Greeks believed. Preaching was repeated more than once with

success, until a reaction set in, and they were driven from the city in a row by both Jews and Greeks. They then traveled to Lyconia, where they preached the gospel and performed miracles, which made the rabble believe that Barnabas was god Jupiter, and that Paul was god Mercurius. The people intended to sacrifice cattle unto them, but Jews from Antioch and Iconium persuaded them of their mistake, with the unfortunate result, that instead of sacrifices being offered in their honor, Paul was stoned, and drawn out of the city, supposing him to be dead; but when the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and went to Derbe. In that city he also preached the gospel, and in many other places likewise, until they both returned to Antioch, where they rehearsed unto the brethren the great things they had done.

CHAPTER XV.—And certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said: "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." No small dissension and dispute arose on this interesting question, and Paul and Barnabas and others were sent to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders in regard to it.—Why the saints did not submit this very important question to the decision of the Holy Ghost, is not explained, though according to Chapter XIII: 2, they were on speaking terms with him.—At Jerusalem the question raised no less dispute than at Antioch, until Peter finally settled it by declaring, that circumcision was not absolutely required in those who were converted Gentiles.—The question was however not settled according to the doctrine of Jesus (see Matthew V: 17-19).—Barnabas and Paul, when returned to Antioch, disagreed soon after; it is stated that "the contention between those two divines was so sharp that they departed asunder" (v. 39.)

CHAPTER XVI.—Paul having now chosen Silas for his travelling companion, came to Derbe and Lystra; a certain disciple was there named Timotheus, the son of a believing Jewess, married to a Greek. Paul desired him also for a travelling companion, he therefore circumcised him because of the Jews, for they knew that his father was a Greek. When they came in Phygia they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia; and when in Mysia they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.—They were thus again in full communication with the Holy Ghost. Paul should have taken that opportunity to have the Spirit decide the vexed question of the circumcision, but he seems not to have thought of it.—A vision then came over Paul, in which he saw a man of Macedonia, praying him to come to Macedonia; Paul knew at once where he had to go to, and acting accordingly, he soon arrived at Philippi, the capital of Macedonia. He there met a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, whom he baptized, and who constrained him to board with her. And one day when Paul and his two friends went to prayer, they were followed by a certain damsel, possessed with a spirit of divination, which made her masters much

gain by soothsaying. The damsel cried out, saying : "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." And this did she many days. But Paul being grieved, turned and said to the Spirit : "I command thee in name of Jesus Christ to come out of her," and he came out the same hour.—Paul probably desired to remain incognito. We saw that Jesus, who was as powerful as God himself, could only cast out devils, because, as he stated, he had subjugated Beelzebub, but as for casting out the Spirit, this was impossible, it being his friend, or rather his near relation, and what house can exist when divided against itself? But Paul, we see, though a man filled with the Spirit, could cast him out of other people, it would appear therefore that Paul was still more powerful than Jesus.—When the masters of the damsel saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the market-place unto the judges. The consequence was, that Paul and Silas were flogged, and cast into prison. Paul and Silas, while there, employed their time in praying and singing praise unto God. That charming music appear to have been acceptable to the mighty Being, for there suddenly was a great earthquake ; the foundations of the prison were shaken ; all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. The prison-keeper, in great trepidation, drew his sword, intending to kill himself, but Paul re-assured him in a friendly way that his prisoners had not bolted out. Secured in this respect, he took them to his own house, where presently he was baptized. The magistrates being informed of what had passed, gave orders to let them go, Paul, however, declined to do so, and desired the magistrates themselves to bring them out.—As it cannot be supposed that Paul was fond of remaining in prison, it is evident that he wished to be considered a great man, and took all the credit of the earthquake to himself. If it did take place at all, the miracle may have been similar to that of the tumbling walls of Jericho. (See our observations of Joshua VI.)

CHAPTER XVII.—On their arrival at Thessalonica, the travelling apostles met with great success ; many believed also among the Greeks, and not a few women ; but the Jews, who believed not, took unto them some lewd fellows of the baser sort to assault Paul and his friends. They therefore left the city stealthily, and went to Berca. At that place they met with a better reception ; many were converted, including some honorable Greek women. Paul then went to Athens, where he preached in the market, but the epicurean and stoic philosophers called him a babbler. He was honored, however, with a hearing at the Areopagus, where he explained himself at length ; when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said : "We will hear thee again on this matter ;" a few, however, believed.—It is strange that in the address at the Areopagus the words Son of God are not mentioned once ; he only speaks of Unity but not of Trinity, and represents Jesus as a mortal, but not as a God

CHAPTER XVIII.—Paul then departed from Athens and arrived at Corinth, where he took lodgings with a Jew named Aquila, whose wife was named Priscilla; he there worked with the Jew at his craft, tent-making.—As the Greeks lived in houses and not in tents, we may suppose that the only tents alluded to, were shrines, imitations of temples, made of brass or silver, which they used for purposes of ornament and worship of their household gods. Such employment was certainly not quite proper for an apostle, but perhaps Paul only resorted to it to satisfy his immediate personal wants; or, perhaps, he found great pleasure in the company of Aquila and his wife Priscilla, in which case he may, for friendship's sake, have submitted to those unapostlelike duties.—While working at his trade, he did not forget the work of the Lord, for he preached every Sabbath-day in the synagogue, converting many Greeks as well as Jews. Opposition soon set in, however, among the Jews, and they blasphemed Paul; when he shook his raiment, saying: "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go among the Gentiles."—We learn from this how great was the spirit of Christian meekness in Paul; it is not probable, though, that his threats frightened the Jews very much.—They made insurrection with one accord against him, and brought him to the judgment-seat. But Gallio, the deputy, on learning that the question was merely one of words and names, and Jewish law, dismissed the case; Paul now departed for Syria with Aquila, and Priscilla his wife, after having shorn the head of the husband, on account of a vow. In Asia Minor he converted, among others, the great scholar Apollo, who had only known the baptism of John.

CHAPTER XIX.—On his travels in the northern part of Asia Minor he came to Ephese, where he asked the Christians if they had received the Holy Ghost; but they answered: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Paul then baptised them in the name of Jesus, and while he laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spoke with tongues, and all these men were about twelve. The apostle remained about two years in that city, and special miracles were wrought by his hands, even so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the disease departed from them, and the evil went out of them. The inhabitants believed so devoutly that they brought all their books of curious arts together, and burned them before all men, and they counted the price of them, and found it worth fifty thousand pieces of silver; so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed. But at last a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, brought about a stir among his fellow tradesmen against Paul. Demetrius made silver shrines, imitations of the temple of Diana, and Paul's movement interfered with his profitable business. Every silversmith was full of wrath, and they cried: "Great is the Diana of the Ephesians." The whole city was soon filled with confusion, and the mob having caught Paul's travelling companions, rushed with them into the theatre. Paul was kept out of the crowd by his disciples. The people made

the greatest uproar, and when a certain Alexander, a Jew, intended to speak in his defence, the people hissed at him, because they could hear that he was a Jew. A short but sensible speech of the town-clerk appealing to the mob to abide by the law, restored quietness and order, and they dispersed.—It would not be at all impossible that the tent (or shrine) maker Paul and his friend Aquila may have manufactured little tents or shrines for the virgin Mary and other saints, and that this was the reason why the silversmith's opposition arose.

CHAPTER XX.—Shortly afterwards Paul proceeded to Macedonia, and arrived in due time at Philippi; he remained there three months, when he proceeded to go to Asia; on reaching as far as Troias he resolved to stay there seven days. Here he was preaching once in an upper-chamber and prolonged his sermon until midnight, when a young man who had fallen asleep, sitting in a window, fell down, from the third loft, and was taken up dead; but Paul coming down fell on him and said: "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him."—It would appear, though it is not stated, that the young man survived, but if so, it furnishes no proof of the divine power of Paul, as there are numerous instances of similar miraculous escapes, and it would therefore be the most sensible to attribute his recovery to casual causes.—Paul departed after this, on his way to Jerusalem, as he said, never to return to Macedonia. On taking leave of the elders, he omitted not to show up his own record in terms of unmeasured self-praise; which, of course, he had a perfect right to do, following in this the example of his lord Jesus. And the people wept sore when he left.

CHAPTER XXI.—The author of the Acts who, it is said was St. Luke, appears to have been now of Paul's travelling party, for since the preceding chapter he constantly mentions "*we*" which would lead us to infer, that he was since an eye witness.—"And it came to pass," the author continues, "that after we had launched, we came with a straight course unto Cos, and the day following unto Rhodes, from there to Patara, and finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went on board and set forth," &c. The Spirit having intimated to Paul, that he should not go to Jerusalem, the party at last stopped at Cesarea.—The Christians of Philippi had furnished Paul with funds for the relief of the poor brethren of Jerusalem, the money may have been spent in travelling expenses, and hence perhaps the injunction of the Spirit.—At Cesarea Paul and his party entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven evangelists (we only know of four) and abode with him. Philip had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. And as they tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus, who prophesied that as soon as Paul would show himself in Jerusalem, the Jews would bind his hands and feet. Paul therefore proceeded to Jerusalem at once.—Paul appears to have possessed a singular love of adventure, and as long as he was decent, of course remarks

would be out of place; but this time he disobeyed the Holy Ghost, who only very few weeks previous had emphatically ordered him not to go to Jerusalem.—The brethren were overjoyed to see him again, and hoped to learn from him how the circumcision question should be decided. Paul took to that purpose four men who had a vow on them; their heads were shaved; and he brought them in the temple to await there the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that time an offering should be offered daily, for every one of them. And after these days he intended to perform some ceremony with them, by which some miracle, it would seem, should decide the circumcision question. This though is not stated, as unfortunately, ere the seven days were ended, the Jews stirred up all the people, stating to know that Paul had brought uncircumcised men in the temple, and thus polluted the holy place. The consequence was that Paul got a beating, but was saved by the soldiers, who bound him with chains and had him carried into the castle; and such was the violence of the mob on Paul's sacrilegious act, that he had to be borne by the soldiers. The Chief-captain then interrogated him, at the same time inquiring whether he was the Egyptian robber, who had command of four thousand men in his depredations in the wilderness, but on learning that he was not, he allowed him to address the people in Hebrew.

CHAPTER XXII.—Paul took full advantage of the permission granted him, for he made a long and pithy address. It was of no avail to him however; his eloquence was thrown away on the people, who cried "Away with such a fellow, he is not fit to live." The Chief-captain then ordered Paul to be scourged, expecting by that method to find out the cause of the bitter animosity of the people against him, but Paul disliking the scourging no doubt, and cleverly forgetting the bold language he spoke in Cesarea (Chapter XXI. v. 13.), immediately informed the captain that he was a free-born Roman.—According v. 3 of this chapter in his present address, he said: "I am verily a man which am a Jew;" in Romans IX he said: "my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites,"—accordingly he told a falsehood to the captain. The captain now let him off, but had him brought before the Council.—It would seem that only the Romans enjoyed the privilege of a judgment before punishment.

CHAPTER XXIII.—Scarcely had Saul commenced to address the Chief-priest, and Council as men and brethren, and to state how he had lived in good conscience, or the high-priest Ananias commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth. This put a stop to his oratory, though he quickly told the high-priest that he was a whited wall. And they that stood by, said: "Re-vilest thou God's high-priest," when Paul humbly replied that he knew not that he was the high-priest, for he knew it was written: Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.—Whether Paul spoke this in an ironical way we don't know.—At last Paul perceiving that one part of the Council were Saddu-

cees and the other Pharisees, he cried out: "Men and brethren I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." This brilliant statement set the two parts of the Council at loggerheads with each other, which dispute ran so high, that the chief-captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled to pieces by either Pharisees or Sadducees, commanded the soldiers to take him by force from among them, and to bring him in the castle.—So the christian apostle Paul, who the day before had called himself a Hebrew, and afterwards a free-born Roman to escape scourging, when before the Council called himself not a Christian but a Pharisee, the enemies of his master. To what barefaced falsehood and miserable subterfuge did not Paul have resource.—In the night the Lord stood by him (v. 11,) no doubt another falsehood, for why did not the Lord stand by him in broad day light when before the Council.—Forty Jews entered into a conspiracy to kill him, but Paul having heard of this, informed the chief-captain accordingly, who had him removed from the city by night, when Paul was taken to Cesarea of which Felix was governor.

CHAPTER XXIV.—The high-priest Ananias then went to the governor himself, accompanied by Tertullus an orator, to enter a formal complaint against Paul, who was heard in self-defence; when the governor evidently puzzled, had Paul recommitted, and promised a decision as soon as he received the chief-captain's report. Felix in the meantime treated him well, and even paid him a visit accompanied by his wife, evidently desirous to see the sensation man. On that occasion Paul informed Felix of the day of judgment to come, which information is said to have somewhat agitated the governor; Paul was in prison two years, when Festus succeeded Felix, who left Paul bound.

CHAPTER XXV.—The new governor proposed to Paul that he should appear before the Council in Jerusalem, but the man of the Lord did not like this at all; he therefore appealed to the Roman Emperor. Festus promised to send him to the Emperor, but first he sent him before King (chief-governor) Agrippa, that Paul might have a hearing, and the specification in his case be made out.

CHAPTER XXVI.—On appearing before Agrippa, Paul gave a circumstantial account of himself, and like a true apostle of Christ, he concluded with remarks on Jesus the Christ, saying that he was come to be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and unto the Gentiles. Paul probably thought that he could convert Agrippa and Festus, but the latter said with a loud voice: "Paul thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad." Paul instantly declared he was not mad, politely asking King Agrippa if he believed in the prophets. And Agrippa equally polite, answered:

"thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian." Those governors further thought that he was not guilty of any crime, and that they might have let him go, but for his appeal to the Emperor.—The great apostle therefore, notwithstanding his being so overfilled with the holy Ghost, had made a great blunder. And as for the opinions of Agrippa and Festus that Paul was not guilty, this can be explained without difficulty by remembering, that they were both Romans, and that his offence was not at all of a political character, but one being solely against the holiness of the Jewish temple, in relation to the circumcision question. The probability therefore is, that even if Agrippa and Festus were made acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, they would have been hugely amused.

CHAPTER XXVII.—On his way to Italy, and while on shipboard, a storm arose which lasted fourteen days. Paul, though not a sailor, had prophesied the gale, and he knew moreover to give the advice, that it was time to eat when the gale subsided.—Which shows Paul in the light of a great prophet.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—The ship was wrecked upon the island Melita. The barbarians were very kind to them and kindled a fire that they should warm themselves. Paul had soon an opportunity to display his divine power, for a viper fastened on his hand; but Paul, the unterrified, shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. This was only one of the few remarkable adventures which happened to Paul, so as to remove all doubt, if even the slightest particle remained, that he actually was the Lord's chosen. The chief-man of the barbarians named Publius, received the shipwrecked party with great hospitality in his house. That barbarian's father was very sick, but Paul fully restored him to health in a twinkling. He then proceeded to Rome at last, where he remained two years in custody, with leave to dwell in his own hired house, and receive there all that came to him. And during that time Paul did not cease to preach the gospel to the best of his ability among the Jews of that city, and caused great reasonings among them.—Therewith ends the book entitled the Acts of the Apostles, which we humbly submit should have been entitled the Book of the wonderful adventures of Saul, called St. Paul.

THE EPISTLES OF THE APOSTLES.

The Epistles of the Apostles have generally been considered masterpieces of divine learning and wisdom, as only could be produced by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. We, though, examining the same, do not discover wherein consists the wisdom so much admired, we see nothing particularly sensible in them, and find maintained in one page that is contradicted in the next; or find it in contradiction with the doctrines of Jesus, whose doctrines they profess to preach; besides this, the Epistles are written in a very coarse and confused style, not at all fit to give a high opinion of the eloquence of the Holy Ghost. Also every one, by reading the Epistles, shall discover (provided he condescends to lay aside for the time his religious reverence for these apostolic productions), that what they contain is, for the greater part, only cant and foolscap. This must be plain to every one who uses his common sense, and therefore we shall merely limit ourselves with showing a little of the contradictions, and of the apostolic hocus-pocus, leaving it to the reader to investigate further for himself, for it would be very tedious to repeat over again all that these epistles cant forth.

The first Epistle we meet with is of Paul to the Roman Christians. He commences by introducing himself as the servant of Jesus Christ, separated to be an apostle (he might have said separated by myself, since he never followed Jesus as a disciple); he thereupon blesses the Roman Christians in an apostolic, yet courteous manner, calling them saints, beloved of God. A few lines further he calls them Gentiles, and enumerates the vices and crimes existing among them. This list of vices is very crude and repulsive; and as nouns, substantive and adjective, are strangely intermixed therein, it proves not favorably for the clearness of expressing himself of that great divine. This for his first chapter; in the next, Paul (while wisely exhorting his men not to judge others, since such proceeding does not take away their sins), says, it is God who shall judge all in the great day of judgment, every one according to his deeds. Even Gentiles, he continues, may then be justified when acting according to the law, though not knowing the law.—This, surely, is a very sensible view of the matter, yet the doctrine of Jesus was, that only those who believe in him can become inhabitants of heaven, while all the others are to be thrown in the great pit of fire. Thus according to Christ, the deeds come not into consideration, since belief alone can save. Now Paul, as a servant of Jesus Christ, ought to have preached the same as his master, or he proved to be unworthy of being separated to be an apostle.—In Chapter III. Paul proposes the question, which may be the advantage of being a Jew, and circumcised? While reasoning upon this subject, he declares everybody to be a liar (v. 4). And, continues he, would any one call him a sinner because he, by means of lies, makes the truth of God more abound unto his glory? God forbid (v. 7). Every one is under the sin, he says,

Jews as well as Gentiles, and therefore God has bethought the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through the faith in his blood, so that everybody may be justified. Therefore, he concludes, a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law (v. 28).—Here the apostle is in contradiction with his teaching of the preceding chapter.—In Chapt. VI, (v. 1-14) he gives plainly to understand that a Christian is placed above the law through his faith, and none of his acts can be considered as sins, since the Christian has nothing to do with the prescriptions of the law.—Also in Chapt. VII, while reasoning in a learned, theological manner, he declares that when he, or any other Christian, sins, it is not himself that sins, but the sinful nature within him, for he himself wishing only the good, on account of his faith, serves God at heart, his sins notwithstanding; for this reason, he thinks the Christian should be thankful towards God, for having caused Christ to be crucified.—In Chapter VIII. Paul reiterates, that damnation is an impossibility for them who are in Christ, they all walk in the Ghost, their flesh may sin and be destroyed because of their sin, but their spirit will live because of their justification in the grace coming from the blood of Christ.—Notwithstanding these truly enviable advantages of being a Christian, Paul confesses (in Chapt. IX) to wish to be a Jew, accursed from Christ, like his kinsmen are; for the Jewish religion has the covenant, and the law, and the service of God, and the promises, which beautiful things the Christian religion lacks; for that reason, it pains the apostle to be aware of the fact that the Jewish creed is not sufficient to justify. In the next Chapter Paul says, while still talking of the beauty of the Jewish religion, it only lacks the grace which is in Christ. Yet the Jews will, he continues, be justified in the end, for if God commences with justifying the Gentiles, it is merely in order to provoke the Jews into jealousy.—In this way Paul goes on, oftentimes contradicting himself, and sometimes not, but always producing solecisms, too tedious indeed to repeat that all. Accordingly we shall cease from commenting on his religious instructions; yet, as we think it required to observe that the holy apostle was not entirely free from vanity, and on account thereof told many stories, we will point out some of them, that the reader may see that a holy man could lie as well as any other person.

For instance, in the second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (Chapt. IX) he boasts not to be a whit behind the chiefest apostle (v. 5). In v. 16 he requests the Corinthians not to take him for a fool; still, if they choose to do so, he knows they will bear with him, because they are wise, and wise folks will bear with fools. On the strength of that argument, he thinks he may as well talk as a fool; thus proceeding, he says he is more than any of the other apostles, in labor more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews he received five times thirty-nine stripes; thrice was he beaten with rods, once was he stoned, thrice he suffered shipwreck, and once even he was for twenty-four hours in the deep of the sea (v. 22-26).—Probably like Jonah in a whale!—In Chapter XII. of the same Epistle, he boasts still better, he asserts that fourteen years ago he was caught by God and drawn up into the third

heaven (namely, the third story of heaven), there he heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful to utter, and as God feared the abundance of the revelation might exalt Paul's vanity, he thrust a thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan, so as to buffet him. Thrice he had prayed to take the thorn away, but God had replied Paul should be satisfied with his grace. This thorn, now, in Paul's flesh, was the cause of his many bodily infirmities.

Again, in the first Epistle of the Thessalonians (Chapt. IV : 16-18), he assures that the Lord shall come down from heaven, with an archangel blowing the trumpet of God, then the dead in Christ shall rise first, and thereupon says he, shall we (Paul and the Thessalonians) who are yet alive, be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, henceforth to remain with him forever. —It must be an interesting sight to see Paul and his congregation of saints flying in the air like a flock of geese. May they enjoy the fresh air!

The nonsense of such stories is too apparent to pay much attention thereto. The Epistles of the other apostles contain perhaps a little less of this kind of eccentricities, yet as to what concerns their teachings, they are as absurd and as full of sophistry as Paul's.

James, the apostle (according to Galat. I : 19, a brother of Jesus), wrote a general Epistle, directed to the twelve tribes of Israel (who by-the-by existed no more.) He congratulates the twelve scattered tribes on their falling into divers temptations, because, he says, the trying of faith worketh patience.—This of course makes it worth a congratulation.—He further gives them some general exhortations, saying therewithal many good things, so that we may safely view his Epistle as the most sensible of all.

Peter, the apostle, also wrote Epistles. He differs in opinion with Paul, as he teaches the circumcision to be requisite to the Christian, while Paul taught faith alone to be sufficient. Yet Peter preached as Paul had done, the coming down from heaven of the Lord (Christ) as near at hand; even so near at hand that he exhorted the Christians in Asia to keep themselves sober, and be continually watching and praying, because the coming of Christ was expected at any moment (1 Peter IV).—In his second Epistle he warns the faithful most strenuously against the false teachers of the latter days, who already were preaching their heresies among them. He gives an awful description of these false teachers, predicting they shall utterly perish in their own corruption.

The apostle John wrote a general Epistle, speaking therein a good deal of the word of life, and of the light of life, and he winds up, warning, as strenuously as Peter did, against the false teachers, the antichrists, the liars, who deny that Jesus is the Christ. And Jesus, he says, came by water and by blood, not by water alone, but by water and by blood. The Spirit beareth witness thereof; for there are three that bear witness in heaven, and three that bear witness on earth. Those in heaven, says John, are the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and those on earth are: the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood, who all three agree in one (1 John IV and V).—We suppose John had consulted with the spirit with but little water before he wrote these confused words of wisdom.

The apostle Jude, a brother of James, wrote also a general epistle, and also warns against the false teachers, the mockers, denying the only God 'the Lord Jesus Christ,' but he knows that the beloved ones, who are building themselves upon their most holy faith, by praying in the holy Ghost, have no need of his warning, because they will keep themselves in the love of God, by looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, unto the eternal life. Therefore to the only wise God 'the Saviour,' be the glory and majesty forever, says Jude.—Thus God, the Father, had done altogether with Jude, since the Saviour Jesus had become the only wise God.

As we stated, the epistles are according to our opinion nothing but compilations of foolscap, wherein sophistry and big words take the place of sense; we now leave it to the reader to ascertain himself of this fact, by an impartial perusal of these apostolic writings.

THE REVELATION

OF

SAINT JOHN THE DIVINE.

CHAPTER I.—This revelation was given by God to Jesus Christ, who again gave it to John, his servant. It commences with the exclamation "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things, which are written therein: for the time is at hand."—John thus, notwithstanding the holiness of that revelation, boldly states, that the time of the coming of Jesus is at hand; more than eighteen hundred years have passed since he wrote, and Jesus has not made his appearance, wherefore we are obliged to declare John's statement to be a falsehood.—The revelation as we are further informed was addressed to the Seven Churches which are in Asia. John salutes them most solemnly, also he speaks in the name of Jesus. He then again addresses them in his own name, informing them, that he was in the spirit on the Lord's day, when it happened that he saw one, in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the hips with a golden girdle; his head and his hairs were white like wool as white as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters; and he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. —This very respectable looking individual was according to Revelation II: 7,

nothing less than the Spirit of God in person.—It may be presumed that before John committed those impressive lines to paper, he had read the prophecy of Daniel X, where also mention is made of a distinguished celestial personage with polished brass feet. It is to be regretted that those extraordinary individuals do not make their appearance nowadays, as they would, viewing the description, pass for a great curiosity, and command unbounded admiration. Their words spoken with a voice sounding like many waters, might, however, not be easily understood, therefore we hope that John understood at least what was told him, and will give it to us in intelligible language. We will soon know what he does.

CHAPTER II.—The resplendent individual then ordered John to write to the angel of the Church of Ephesus, that he knew his works, his labour and his patience; he had something against him however, namely: that he had left his first love; the angel of the Church was nevertheless right in an other point, to wit: in hating the deeds of the Nicolaites, which he hated also. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Church. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (v. 1-7).—That was no doubt a charming promise to those Ephesian saints who were blessed with ears, and who would be fortunate enough to overcome; a pity though that it was a promise the fulfilment of which no earthly creature ever saw.—The man with the seven golden candlesticks then ordered John to write to the angel of the Church in Smyrna, that he knew his works, tribulation and poverty; but he should not fear, and be faithful unto death, for therefore he would receive the crown of life. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit said unto the church. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. (8-11).—It must be admitted, by those who have good sense, that this promise must have been highly acceptable to the saints of Smyrna, who enjoyed the blessing of possessing ears, so that they could hear that they should die only once; for death is an ugly thing and seldom courted; these saints are really to be envied!—He which hath the sharp sword with two edges, then ordered to write to the angel of the church in Pergamus, that he knew where he dwelt, to wit where Satan's seat is; he was nevertheless tolerably satisfied with them, though he had some things against them, namely that some held the doctrine of Balaam. 'Therefore repent,' he said, "or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear &c. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone" &c. (v. 12-17).—Hitherto the place of residence of Satan was unknown; everybody knew that he resides somewhere on earth, where he amuses himself in leading people into temptation, but the real place was never designated with certainty; the Spirit of the Lord solves now that question by informing us that Pergamus is the place. It would be a good plan if all the pious folks would undertake a crusade against the Arch-villain; and if he which hath the two edged

sharp sword would lend a hand, and provide a good supply of the hidden manna as army provisions, the enterprise would no doubt be successful!—To the angel of Thyatire was to be written that the man, whose eyes are like a flame of fire and whose feet are like fine brass, knew his works, charity, service, and faith, but he objected that the woman Jezebel, which called herself a prophetess, should teach and seduce his servants into committing fornication. And he would cast her into a bed, and into great tribulation with them that committed adultery with her. He that overcometh will have power over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron, and he shall receive the morning star (v. 18-28).—That the prostitute Jezebel, with all the seduced servants of Thyatire, must have been in a great tribulation when the Spirit cast them all into one bed may be imagined, but we also imagine that the friends of the Spirit, to whom he promised the present of the morning star, must have been in tribulation, seeing that the morning star is a jewel of about the size of the earthly globe, thus altogether too much for a breastpin, and would incommode the wearer greatly.

CHAPTER III.—John had next to write to the angel of the Church of Sardis, in the name of him that hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars; that he should be watchful, else he would come on him as a thief; a few in Sardis had not defiled their garments; all such should walk with him in white, and he that overcometh he shall clothe him in white raiment, and his name shall not be blotted out of the book of life. He that hath an ear etc., (v. 1-6).—From this we learn that there are seven spirits of God, we thought he got only one, perhaps two, that is one for himself, and one for his Ghost; but now we discover how we underestimated him; this really is too bad; but, if only the spirit had put us from time to time in clean white as he promised to do with those of Sardis, we might have thought more of him, and have been inclined to estimate him seven fold, especially in summer time.—To the angel of the Church of Philadelphia should next be written, that he that is holy and true, and hath the key of David and openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, had seen that he with his little strength had kept the word of his patience, and therefore he would keep him from temptation. "Behold," he proceeded, "I come quickly, hold that fast what thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh, will be made a pillar in the temple, &c. He that hath an ear &c." (v. 7-13)—How delighted the Philadelphian saints must have been to receive the promise that they would soon become pillars in the temple. Such honor is tremendous! What a pity that the Lord did not come quickly to fulfill the promise.—To the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, John had to write in the name of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; that he knew that they were neither hot nor cold, and now because they were lukewarm, he would spew them out of his mouth. Because they thought themselves rich and not in need of anything, but were wretched; he would punish them; they had better repent, as he stood at the door. He that overcometh could sit with him on his throne. He that

bath an ear, etc. (v. 14-22).—It is to be regretted that the Loadiceans were not as hot as was desirable, but that the Spirit would spew them out of his mouth, because they were lukewarm, and had rather they were cold, this was not right, as they had to be lukewarm before they could get cold.

It is remarkable to observe how the Christians can admire the very extraordinary things which the Spirit spoke to the seven churches, for to speak the truth, what else is this language but the most nauseous bombast? Some of the pious people, however, pretend that the faith, as also the defects, of the seven first Christian communities, are therein described, with so much correctness, that it proves beyond doubt that this revelation was actually come from God. They forget, though, that the three first chapters are in fact no foretelling of future things, but principally contain praises and exhortations for the first Christian churches; and were written while those churches were in existence, so that if there be mixed with the confused mad-tom's talk which they contain some few accounts agreeing with the history of the first churches, such is nothing astonishing; and one must be either idiot, or imposter, to claim, on account of the mentioned assumption, divinity for such language. The so-called prophecy of the revelation commences with the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.—John saw a door opened in heaven, and he heard a voice as it were the sound of a trumpet, which said: "Come up hither, and I will show thee things, which must be hereafter;" and he saw one sitting on a throne who looked like a jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And around about the throne were four and twenty seats occupied by four and twenty elders, clothed in white raiment and crowns of gold on their head. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings, etc., etc., as also four beasts full of eyes, before and behind, and they did not rest day nor night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."—That the lord almighty, who never came, must have been pleased that the animals, with eyes in their back parts, declared him holy, may readily be supposed. How could a god be perfect without vanity, as it must be one of the requirements of perfection to possess all qualities existing.

CHAPTER V.—The apostle then describes four terrible beasts, which idea he evidently borrowed from Daniel. His so-called prophecy, however, is still more confused language than that of Daniel's, and is about as much to the purpose. The apostle saw yet another beast besides the mentioned four, a lamb, the blood of which would redeem every kindred tongue, people and nation.—This expression of lamb, of course alludes to Jesus, the meek and lowly Lord of the Christians.

CHAPTER VI.—John looking at the lamb once more, heard something like thunder, when one of the four beasts said: "Come and see." John accepted the invitation, and he witnessed many wonderful things, too numerous to describe: earthquakes (in heaven), lightning and thunder, a sun black as sackcloth of hair, the moon looking as blood, stars falling from heaven like untimely figs, heaven rolled up as a scroll when it is rolled together, and amidst that great disorder a voice of a beast offered for sale, a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny.—The holy things the apostle witnessed were terrible indeed; he must have been under great excitement by that time, though the holy beasts and holy angels must have been still more so; for if the heaven was rolled up as a scroll, what could have become of them, they must have dropped from on high, and must have badly hurt themselves, particularly if in their fall they encountered the rain of stars; for the stars are somewhat bigger than hailstones. We therefore not only pity John that he was a witness of those terrors, but we pity in particular those holy souls who were the victims on the occasion.

CHAPTER VII.—This time John saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth (the earth appears to have been square in those days). They called some thousands of the twelve tribes of Israel together; for the lamb was to feed them and to lead them unto the living fountains of water.

CHAPTER VIII.—John then saw seven angels who stood before God, and to whom seven trumpets were given. Those angels sounded their trumpets alternately, and by each sound, horrible things took place; hail, fire, and blood fell on the earth, and great mountains of fire fell into the sea. Burning stars fell from heaven, and a third part of the sun was smitten, and of the moon and of the stars. (Those stars fell down before, but had probably been bounced back so as to fall once more), and an angel cried: "Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on earth."—That such a narrative is very impressive, and particularly calculated to stimulate Christian piety, is not to be denied; it is furthermore instructive, as showing in how witty a manner the Holy Ghost knew to group horrors together, in order that John might have something to stir up piety, and propagate the holy creed.

CHAPTER IX.—We learn now about a bottomless pit, out of which came much smoke and large numbers of locusts, with the power of scorpions, and they were like battle-horses, and their faces like those of men, with woman's hair and lion's teeth.—According to this description, those locusts were not at all like locusts, rather resembling deformed centaurs.—John continues in the same strain, and his babble is so disgusting and foolish, that it cannot easily be perceived what

ground exists to believe those stories to have proceeded from a wise and upright God.

CHAPTER X.—John saw now a mighty angel descend from heaven with a rainbow on his head, a face like the sun, and feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book in his hand, and he roared like a lion. The seven thunders then uttered their voices, after which John had to eat the little book, which he did, and it was sweet in his mouth like honey, though bitter in his belly. This gave John the necessary strength for continuing his prophecy.

CHAPTER XI.—Then was given to John a reed like a rod, and he was ordered to measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. While engaged in this important duty, he saw a remarkable occurrence of two witnesses of the Lord; they were killed by men, but suddenly jumped on their feet again and ascended to heaven.—More instructive and entertaining episodes are communicated here, all of the same weight.

CHAPTER XII.—And John saw a great wonder in heaven (as if the other wonders were not great!) he saw a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and twelve stars on her head. And she being with child, cried, travelling in birth. Another sign was also seen in heaven, namely, a great red dragon having seven heads with ten horns, ready to devour the woman's child as soon as it was born, its tail being meanwhile employed in drawing a third part of the stars from heaven, and to cast them on earth. But the woman fled into the wilderness upon the wings of an eagle; this greatly displeased the dragon; and John stood near the seashore.—The cause of the dragon's anger against the woman is not known, of course, but it may be that she had procured him the ten horns, which perhaps was more than he could bear.

CHAPTER XIII.—John saw again a beast come up from the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his head a name of blasphemy. And all the world wondered after the beast, and worshipped him. Later the apostle saw another beast, the image of this beast, and it spoke and tempted all people, by means of signs and miracles, to worship the first beast.—This narrative seems to contain an unfathomable depth of sense, for many books of expoundings and explanations have been issued on the subject of the beast and the image; and yet thousands more of books might be filled with such, without ever reaching the conclusion.

CHAPTER XIV.—And lo, John saw a lamb standing on mount Zion with 144000 elects. Those men were not defiled with women, but were virgins, and in their mouth was found no guile; they were without fault before God.—From this description we should judge that those elects were Roman Catholic priests and monks, as those are all virgins, we know, and no guile is in their mouths!—An angel was then seen flying in the midst of heaven, preaching the gospel, and saying with a loud voice: “Fear God;” and another angel followed, saying: “Babylon is fallen, the great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” A third angel then followed, saying, with a loud voice: “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark on his forehead or in his hand, the same shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and of the lamb”. . . In proof of the torture in store, John tells of a wine-press which he saw in operation, and out of which so much blood was running that the horses ran through it up to the bridle.

CHAPTER XV.—John saw another marvellous sign, seven angels having the seven last plagues, and he saw a sea of glass, and they that had got the victory sang a song of Moses, and a song of the lamb.

CHAPTER XVI.—A great voice was now heard, saying to the seven angels to pour out the seven vials of wrath of the Lord upon the earth.—How merciful the God of the Christians must be to hold the vials of wrath suspended over their heads!—And when the first vial was poured out a noisome and grievous sore came among men; the second vial made the sea like blood; the third also changed the fountains of water into fountains of blood; on the fourth the men were scorched with heat; on the fifth the kingdom of the beast was full of darkness; on the sixth the river Euphrates dried up, that the way for the great king of the east might be prepared (namely, for Jesus, who was to take possession of the throne of David); and on the seventh, and the last, there was thunder, lightning and earthquakes, Babylon and other great cities of the Gentiles were destroyed; and a great hail fell upon the men, every stone about the weight of a talent, and men blasphemed God, because of the plague of the hail, which was great.—We are not surprised at this blasphemy, as it would have been impossible for men to love a God who inflicted such treatment upon them.

CHAPTER XVII.—One of the seven angels wished to show John the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication; he then carried John into the wilderness, where he saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, having seven heads and ten horns. John wished an explanation, when the angel, confidentially, told him that the great

whore was the great city which ruleth the kings of the earth ; the seven heads were the seven mountains on which that city was built, and the ten horns were ten kings receiving power in one hour with the beast ; even the beast was the eighth king.—From the above we should judge that John alluded to Rome, which is built on seven hills, from which supremacy was carried over all parts of the then known world. It is unnecessary to expect more explanation of such nonsensical compilation. John, or whoever may have been the author of the Revelation, was of course a sworn enemy of Rome, as it was in that city that the early Christians were most persecuted (principally under Nero's reign), and where two of the holy apostles died as martyrs. It is not surprising therefore, that the apostolic author calls that city bad names, comparing it to a whore, gaudily dressed ; the more as Rome was distinguished from other cities by its magnificence and the loose morals which prevailed there. Its emperors and authorities came in for a share of the bad names, he calls them beasts and dragons, and one statesman, who is supposed to carry out his imperial master's policy, he styles the image of the beast. To search for prophecy in this so-called Revelation, would be the work of a simpleton, as the nonsense is too gross to entertain for an instant the belief that the Divinity would have lent his sanction to such ravings. The case simply was, that John expected to please the Christian people, and scare the Romans, by foretelling the approaching destruction of Rome and a terrible fate to its authorities. It is now more than eighteen centuries since the total destruction of Rome was prophesied by John as near at hand, and Rome still exists.

CHAPTER XVIII.—John saw again another angel, and the earth was lighted with his glory, and he cried mightily with a strong voice : “ Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird ; for all nations have drank of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies” (v. 1, 2)... “ And in her is found the blood of the prophets, and of the saints and of all that were slain upon the earth” (v. 24).—The saying that in her is found the blood of the saints and of all those that were slain upon the earth, is because from Rome the order proceeded to exterminate the Christian rioters. That the apostle calls her by the name of Babylon, is because that city's name, with the Jews, was synonymous with corruption and immorality ever since their captivity in that place. He could not very well say ‘Rome,’ because this prophecy, for as such it was intended, would have lost thereby its hue of mystery, and also because the Roman police might have held him to account for his bombast, which would not have been agreeable for him.

CHAPTER XIX.—A great voice was then heard by John, saying: "Alleluia, salvation and glory, etc. unto the Lord our God!" and the twenty-four elders and four beasts fell down, exclaiming: "Amen, alleluia!" Then again the voice of a great multitude said: "Alleluia, the Lord Omnipotent reigneth!" Heaven thereupon opened, and a white horse appeared mounted by one, who was called "Faithful and True," though his name was properly the "Word of God." He was going to make war against the beast and the kings of the earth, and the false prophet, and soon all those were taken prisoner by him, and cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.—This was no doubt the easiest way of disposing of one's enemies, and it is really surprising that the thing was not done long before, as it seemed to be so easy.

CHAPTER XX.—John thereupon saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand, and belaid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he should be released for a little season.—It would have been quite as sensible in the Lord if he had extended his kindness a little further, by keeping the devil bound forever; or better still, if he had cast him into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And it would have been still better, in our humble opinion, if he had done this in the first days of the creation, as by so doing the Lord would have saved himself a heap of trouble, and mankind might have lived in peace.—After this capture, John found that the peace, or armistice, for one thousand years had set in, after which Satan was to have a fresh start, and says John, he shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together in battle, but the saints, whose camp shall be compassed, are to be delivered by God with fire from heaven, which will devour their enemies. And the devil that deceived them, John saw, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and he shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. And all the dead, small and great, John saw standing before God, and Death and Hell were also cast into the lake of fire. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was also cast into the lake of fire.—This is a most magnificent and expressive picture of the last judgment, and no wonder, for John happened to be an eye-witness, and his testimony is true, he says so himself many times. It might be said that one who only believes one tenth part of it must profess religious ideas more fantastical than those ever entertained by Gentiles, but such who say so, have no faith, and we pity them, for blessed are those so poor in spirit, that they can believe all that Christian apostles state!

CHAPTER XXI.—The apostle saw, at last, a new heaven and a new earth, and he saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, with the tabernacle of God. John was after this provided with a golden reed by the angel, by means of which he must measure the city, and the tabernacle. He furnishes us all the dimensions; and he also furnishes an account of what costly material all was constructed, of jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, etc. The gates were big pearls (pierced through very likely), and the streets of the city were paved with pure gold. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamb was the light thereof. And there shall in no wise, he says, enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the lamb's book of life.—Seeing that the author of the Revelation never made a lie, he had all chance of coming in that happy city!

CHAPTER XXII.—And the angel showed John a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the lamb; on either side of the river was the tree of life. And there shall be, he says, no more curse, for the servants will serve God and the lamb, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be written on their foreheads. Then a voice said: "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (v. 7). And another voice said: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand" (v. 10). Still another voice spoke: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be." The Lord Jesus then made his appearance, stating "surely, I come quickly" (v. 20).—With this statement the prophecy breaks off, adding the admonition, that if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.—But, as according to our opinion, this book contains nothing that is very agreeable, we would advise any one to take away from it as much as possible.—After John had said all this, he exclaims, full of spiritual enthusiasm: "Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus"—But unfortunately the Lord Jesus paid no attention to this appeal, for he never came, and though he himself, and all his mysterious voices, had said he would come quickly, still he never came.

Any one who reads this so-called Revelation, and who is not simple enough to be awed by hollow sounds of frightful words, must needful acknowledge that this book is only a collection of monstrosities. Those monstrosities are evidently compiled from the books of the old prophets and of ghost stories, rolled up into one, and engrossed by the humor of the hypocrite who wrote this humbug, calling it a Revelation of God. About seventeen or eighteen centuries have passed away since this prophecy was written; it states repeatedly that the arrival of Jesus is at hand (surely I come quickly), and that the things which are described therein were soon to take place; but nothing of the kind ever happened. It

may be needless to remark, that all those miracles of black suns, and stars falling as hail, and heavens rolled up into a scroll, are incompatible with the nature of things, and therefore never can come to pass by any possibility. . . . But why, you will say, should they have compiled a revelation? The reason is this: the Christian creed needed prophecies; the apostles taught that heaven and earth should be turned topsy turvy, and be renewed; that a resurrection of the dead was to take place; that Christ should sit on the throne of Jerusalem and reign, and that Satan and all unbelievers were to be cast into hell fire, while the others should be with Christ; but they taught this and more mysteries, without demonstrating on what ground they made such statements. This discrepancy was noticed; therefore one of the apostles, or one of the later elders of the church struck upon the idea of compiling this book, which by its mystery could even be made to answer more than one purpose; as for instance, it could at the same time serve to frighten the early infidels and scoffers, that they might not bring harm to the new creed, and spoil the power and comfort of the new apostles, the elders and Bishops. Some expounders, however, either simpletons, or crack-brained with Christian-theological learning, attempted to explain the Revelation, as if an intelligible whole could ever be formed out of the collected ravings of several lunatics (prophets). They thus pretended that the beast was intended to designate the pope, and the prostitute Babylon was his city; and some succeeded as far as in applying a few stray sentences for that purpose, gathered from different chapters. But as repeated mention is made of dragons, false prophets, images of beasts, satans, old serpents, red and white horses, locusts with human heads, lions with the wings of eagles, calves full of eyes, in front and behind, and all sorts of imaginable and unimaginable beasts, of all this they wisely forgot to give explanations, which clearly shows that they were not able to expound the meaning of the whole prophecy. We however have expounded the meaning of this Revelation, and we advise every one who is not satisfied with our views, to expound the same for himself, but then, before all, we advise him to keep also the explanation for himself, for it is written: "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book"—and what faithful Christian would not wish to partake of the great blessings which are written in this book!

REVIEW

OF THE CAREER OF JESUS OF NAZARETH AND OF THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

Jesus, surnamed the Christ, was born about 1861 (according to others about 1863) years ago of a young woman, whose name was Mary; she lived in the small town of Nazareth in Galilee, where she was betrothed to a carpenter named Joseph. This couple are supposed to have been of Jewish descent, though their place of residence was not in the land of the Jews; Galilee being settled by a population, in the Bible called Samaritans, who were chiefly of Phœnician origin. Not much is known of Jesus in the days of his boyhood, the little what is written by Catholic saints reads like fiction; and we first learn with somewhat more distinctness about him when he was about thirty years of age; from that time his career was short; it though led to important results. Jesus then, who, it seems, was at that period a fisherman on the lake of Genesareth, also called sea of Galilee, came once upon the idea of constituting himself a prophet. The prophet's profession had always enjoyed much consideration among the Jews; and had also spread among neighbouring nations or tribes. The cause of this success of the prophet's profession may be that by far the largest number of towns were without temple or place of worship, so that the inhabitants, when feeling inclined to devoutness, and anxious to approach the Godhead with more effect than they supposed to be able to do in their own house, sought recourse to seers, soothsayers and woe-shriekers, whom they called prophets, and who made a living by it, (vide 1 Sam. IX). In the time of Jesus the prophet's business was again in vogue and quite flourishing, (as apparent from Acts V: 35, 36) and other places in Scripture. Jesus then thought that it was more desirable to become a fisher of men than to be a fisher of fishes (Matt. IV: 19). In order now to ensure success, a prophet required to perform astonishing feats, called miracles, and for this he of course needed reliable assistants; now Jesus had several younger brothers, (himself being the eldest, as he was born before his mother's marriage), and some chose to follow him. Those from among his brothers, who were with

him, were James (Gal. I : 19), Simon (Mark VI : 3) whom he gave the less common name of Peter, and Judas (Judas : 1 and Matth. XIII : 55). Also John seems to have been his brother (vide Matth. XVII : 1, John XIX : 25, 26), but like James of and other father (Matth. IV : 21 and Acts XII : 2.). The prophet's business of Jesus with the assistance of his brothers went on as well as could be desired ; he soon acquired a great reputation, especially by his casting out of devils (for in those days devils seem to have possessed themselves of other people's bodies) ; those persons so possessed appear to have been most times strangers to the inhabitants of Galilee, they though were always quite well acquainted with Jesus, whose name they always called out as loud they could already on a distance, proclaiming to the world what illustrious being he was. In Nazareth his native place, Jesus made however a failure, as notwithstanding his great miracles, the people most emphatically declined to have any faith in him, and when he attempted to speak in the synagogue they ejected him, dragging him out of the place on an elevation, intending to throw him headlong down ; in the confusion however, Jesus managed to escape (Luke IV : 29).

The doctrine Jesus first taught was chiefly that of Communism, a doctrine or theory, which, under different names, and forms, found favor with the poorer classes in almost every country at all periods, as ancient and modern history will fully show. Jesus added to it a great many extraordinary religious precepts, totally incompatible with human nature ; but a prophet in order to be successful had needful to bring forth something new and striking. Jesus moreover preached that the poor would be blessed, and all the rich would be damned on the great day of the Lord, which was near at hand. The day of the Lord was foretold by the prophets, a day when the Lord (to wit : Jehovah) would come down from heaven to crush out wickedness, and rid the earth of wicked people. Those wicked people now, according to Jesus, were nobody else but the rich and the men in authority.—It may easily be imagined, that such preaching pleased hugely the poor and oppressed classes, but unfortunately it was not so much to the taste of Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, nor of the more wealthy classes. John surnamed the Baptist, a cousin and associate of Jesus, who held forth similar riotous theories, had already been imprisoned and beheaded by order of the tetrarch. When now Jesus heard of John's tragical fate, he gathered around him some 70 men, of whom 12, his brothers and a few others remained with him constantly. It is evident on perusal of the several gospel-books, that Peter, James, and John were most intimate with him, while the other of the twelve, were, as it seems, under the impression that he actually was a prophet of God.—The district, in which he performed most of his miracles and secured his fame, was the country surrounding the lake of Galilee. He lived, it appears with his disciples in a fishing boat, sailing to and fro ; sometimes he remained a few days at one place and then repaired to another, when he could leave a good impression behind him ; he always left in his vessel, when the crowds, who came to witness his miracles, became too large, suspecting perhaps that agents of Herod might be amongst them, and in the same way he left, when he became tired of his speeches and parables,

the latter being tales, wherewith he occupied the crowds when no miracles were to be performed. Those parables were borrowed from the Talmud, though very imperfectly reproduced, whereas they are much more intelligible in the original.—The great number of his followers, and their enthusiasm, were suggestive of brilliant prospects, it soon kindled his vanity and aroused his ambition. He was aware of the prophecy of a second king David, God's anointed, who by his piety and might would secure for the people of Israel the power and glory which were promised by Moses. That king would render subject to his sway all the Gentiles then in Palestine, the holy land, and his dynasty should reign forever; and the Israelites would enjoy under that reign such happiness, that their kingdom would fully deserve the name of the heavenly or celestial kingdom, (in the same way as the Chinese call their country the celestial kingdom, and such as John of Leyden, in half of the seventeenth century, proposed to establish in Westphalia).—Jesus then claimed to be the king and hero alluded to in the prophecies, and if successful, he intended to establish the kingdom over which he should rule with the aid of his partisans, making Jerusalem his capital. Having matured his ambitious plans, (and evidently with co-operation of people of means, tired of the Roman rule, and wishing to see Palestine a separate kingdom,) he descended the river Jordan in his vessel, accompanied by a number of followers of both sexes, till Judea, when the party pursued their journey to Jerusalem on foot, under pretext of going to a feast. While on this journey, he seems to have felt uneasy about his ultimate success and the risk he ran for his life, but his ambition got the master and urged him on. He had moreover in his advantage that Jerusalem was not within the jurisdiction of Herod, but in that of Pilate, and Pilate, it seems, was bribed by his friends, and made to believe that Jesus' intentions were merely directed against the Jewish priests. Also Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, his most influential friends, were at this time in Jerusalem, and could aid his cause, and favor his escape in case of failure. It is beyond doubt, that many of the seventy disciples of Jesus, which he had sent along on other roads, had preceded him to Jerusalem, in order to introduce him to the inhabitants by crying 'Hosanna,' on the occasion of his entering that city. This he did, riding on an ass's back, to agree with a prophecy. While he thus stately entered, many cries of 'Hosanna the King' were shouted; those proceeded of course not from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as they do not appear to have been even aware of his existence. They proceeded therefore from the throats of his friends. Jesus by this means was received with much enthusiasm by the mob, who, as everywhere, were fond of something new. Taking advantage of this, he at once proceeded, with his followers, to the temple, and drove out those who happened to be there, under pretext that the temple was his Father's house, and that he as Son was bound to do so. He probably intended to establish his headquarters there, and occupy it for the future as his palace. His calling himself the Son of Jehovah was in accordance with his previous assumption of that title. The gods of other nations had also sons of mortal women born, and why could not Jehovah do as much; besides Jesus having been bred

among Gentiles in Samaria, will not have felt the same reverence for the Jewish God. That pretension was merely to make people believe that he was not a common man ; it implied nothing else, as it was never prophesied of the great king that he should be a son of God, on the contrary, it was prophesied that he should be a son of the house of David.

This mock proceeding of Jesus in the temple created much sensation and roused the indignation of the priests and elders ; they consequently sent a force to seize that disturber of the peace, but Jesus, on hearing of this, left the city in time. He returned the next day, however, accompanied by a band of followers (the number of which cannot be given), and commenced to address the multitudes in the streets, principally assaulting the chief-priests and elders with the most violent language. The novelty of such proceeding, its extreme boldness, not to say recklessness, attracted large crowds ; and when they heard him propound such theories as that labor was not necessary, that all things should be in common, and people should live on other's property, a great many believed that he was the man they wanted. His followers soon increased, so much so that the authorities deemed proper not again to attempt his arrest by daylight, for fear of serious difficulties, and from the insufficiency of military force at their command. They though wished to apprehend that bold rebel, and therefore resorted to stratagem, and succeeded in bribing for a certain sum of money one of his partisans, who had to inform them of the time and place when such seizure could be effected with safety to the public peace. A few days later, when at night the entire population of Jerusalem were celebrating in their homes the feast of the passover, Jesus concealed himself in a garden at some distance from the town with his twelve disciples, of whom but few were armed. The informer went forthwith up and reported the fact. A force was consequently dispatched, and surrounded the garden. Jesus then became suspicious, very likely having heard some sounds, and made up his mind to escape alone, but lo, it was too late ; with a wounded head, from which the blood ran, he had to return to his disciples, who were already asleep, and who were now the only resource left him. The soldiers came up, but Jesus soon perceived that they outnumbered his disciples, and were much better armed, he therefore ordered his followers not to defend him, as it was useless, and would have been the death of those that drew a sword. He was accordingly seized and handcuffed, without resistance, and taken before the high-priest ; his disciples had made good their escape. Early in the morning he was made to appear in the hall of judgment for trial and sentence ; the hour was taken early to prevent the party in his favor from being informed, and succeed in delivering him by mob violence. Jesus was tried and was sentenced to crucifixion (a very common sentence in that time), on account of his inciting the people to rebellion by proclaiming himself king of the Jews, and also for blasphemy, by pretending to be a son of Jehovah. The tetrarch Pilate not being of the religion of the Jews, and to all appearance bribed, tried to save him, but failed in that humane endeavor, he even once presented Jesus before the mob, asking their opinion, but when the people saw that the man, who only the day before had

declared himself to be a son of God, and of equal power as God, stood there with his hands bound with ropes, and utterly powerless, before the very same authorities to whom he yesterday had spoken so defiantly, the spell was broken, the illusion was gone, and they perceived how they had been imposed upon; they would not rescue the imposter, and cried themselves crucify him. Jesus was crucified that day. Joseph of Arimethea and Nicodemus, who probably had counselled him to come to Jerusalem, not being able to spare him the crucifixion, invented a scheme to save his life. Joseph prepared a sepulchre, and as it seems, bribed one of the Roman soldiers to hold up a sponge, which contained a certain mixture, to the face of Jesus, while on the cross, under pretext that it was to relieve his thirst. This mixture must have been some stuff resembling greatly in its effect to what they call now chloroform; for scarcely had Jesus partaken of it, or it gave him the appearance of being dead. Joseph, accompanied by Nicodemus, presently appeared before Pilate, and requested that the body of Jesus might be entrusted to them, which request was granted, though Pilate was greatly surprised to learn that Jesus had died so soon (Mark XV : 44.) A young man would be supposed to have more endurance, since the wounds inflicted in the hands, though painful, could not be mortal. The bones of the body were not broken, as was customary in such cases, in order to end the life of the sufferer. The body lowered off the cross, was carefully wrapped in linen and deposited in the new sepulchre, where it remained that night and the day following. A watch was placed near the sepulchre by the Jewish authorities, as they had some suspicion that the partisans of Jesus intended some trick. On the second night, probably in the darkest of the night, two men disguised in white garments were sent to the sepulchre to deliver Jesus; they making a sudden appearance, scared the watch out of their wits, who fled as fast as they could; and no wonder that in those days of superstition this happened, as they probably mistook them for ghosts. The two men in white now opened the sepulchre and relieved Jesus out of his prison. He arose, and the belief among his followers that he had arisen from the dead, was created. He soon afterwards left Jerusalem, and from that time he was lost sight of. It is not at all impossible that he may have reappeared disguised, and under another name (for instance by that of Stephen), and that he actively employed himself in conjunction with his brothers and friends in the propagation of the new religion, proceeded from his adventures.

This now, is a brief history of Jesus' career. Had he remained dead, his name would never again have been mentioned; he would not even have secured the notoriety of John of Leyden of later times, whose pretended mission and whose motives were entirely similar, and who enjoyed far greater success, having actually reigned over a city (Munster). John of Leyden, however, was killed, and had not, like Jesus, the good fortune of resurrection, hence the difference; he being dead was forgotten, but Jesus arising from death, could not be so easily forgotten. Those among the friends of Jesus, who desired to have his communistic doctrine universally adopted, must have been disappointed on hearing

of his death ; but Jesus arose from the sepulchre, and now their joy was perhaps greater than the disappointment ; they immediately set to perusing the books of the prophets, to discover a prophecy upon the event, and their eyes fell on a chapter of Isaiah. The wretched people of Israel are there compared (in Chapt. LIII) to a leper, repulsed by every one, and suffering, not for his own faults, but on account of the disease (idolatry) other men (nations) had brought on him. This was exactly what they wanted, there certainly was no mention made of the leper declaring himself the ruler over Israel, neither that he was to be Son of God, nor that he was to be crucified, but this did not matter ; there was only stated that an innocent man had to suffer for the wickedness of others, and that his suffering would atone for their sin ; this was sufficient, since uneducated people are easy of belief, and apt to overlook inaccuracies. Therefore they preached, and it was soon settled beyond a doubt in the credulous minds of the believers, that Jesus was the leper designated by Isaiah, and the sin wherefore he suffered was Adam and Eve's tasting of the forbidden fruit, which they called the original sin of mankind. From that time the zealous propagaters of the new creed put their brains on the rack to invent all sorts of absurdities, in view of harmonizing the principal assertion of Jesus, that he was the great Ruler in Israel and the Son of God, with the fact of his dishonorable death and resurrection. The great Ruler of the prophets had thenceforth to be understood in a purely spiritual sense ; and why he was a Son of God, was explained in the following way : the desire of God to blot out the original sin was great, but God's wrath was terrible, and to visit with his wrath some people, or even the whole human family, was thereto insufficient ; he therefore had to think of some other means, to wit, to cause his only and innocent son to be born on earth, and then, God would avenge all the sins of men upon that holy son, by having him nailed with his hands to a piece of wood. This explanation was grand, and has proved to stand the test ; but in order to maintain the same successfully, those zealous and ingenuous propagaters have been compelled to enlarge on their invention day by day ; hence the creation of a creed with theories, and explanations unsurpassed, for absurdity by any other creed ever brought forth by human ingenuity. The mythology of the ancients is wisdom compared to it.

That the Christian religion was less the work of Jesus himself than of the lovers of his communist theories, is self-evident. Jesus only acted a few months as prophet in Galilee, when the unfortunate idea suggested itself to his mind of declaring himself the king of the Jews, the legitimate successor of David, which he immediately paid for by forfeiting his life. It is not likely that he foresaw that his failure would ultimately lead to his being worshipped by a large portion of the Christian family as a God. The most exalted imagination, coupled with the strongest vanity, could never have given rise to such belief in any man of woman born. It is also in reality not Jesus of Nazareth that is worshipped, it is a chimera that is worshipped, to whom the name of Jesus Christ has been given. Jesus the Nazarene only served to suggest the idea of a crucified Christ to the fancy of the founders of the Christian religion ; to them the Nazarene

was what the lay-man is for the artist-painter ; they have put him in position, and dressed him up just as they wanted, so that the Christian religion, as it now exists, is in no manner invented by Jesus, but by a few apostles and ecclesiastics of succeeding generations. It has further been modified, according to the customs and advances in different countries rendered it necessary or desirable, till at last it was rid of all the precepts of Jesus. And so we possess it now.

Since the retirement of Jesus from the world, most of the twelve apostles appear to have gradually resigned their respective commissions ; at least nothing is heard from the most of them. Only Peter persevered and was active in the cause ; for to this man, brother of Jesus, endowed as he was with such a large share of hypocrisy (as evident from his Epistles), this cause seems to have had its charms. The religion he founded slowly spread in Western Asia, but when Mahomet, about 600 years later, came to preach his religion, the majority of Christians turned Mahometans, and only a very slight vestige remained of Christianity. In Europe the Christian religion had more success, principally attributable to the strenuous exertions of the apostle Paul. This man, originally strong in the Jewish faith, and in persecuting the Christians, had been rendered harmless by the apostles ; it can scarcely be doubted that they resorted to trickery at first, and he was soon so far converted, that he publicly appeared as a zealous apostle of the doctrine he formerly persecuted ; at this stage of the matter, they need not fear him any more, even if he had discovered how he was sold, for what man would like to confess publicly that they had made a fool of him. Paul soon preferred to go preaching abroad, and with that object he travelled through Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor. The doctrine he propagated differed greatly from the one maintained by Peter and of the precepts of the Nazarene. It was a creed almost entirely of his own invention, to which the name then in vogue, of " the Lord Jesus Christ, the crucified," merely served as epithet. After having displayed himself very actively in the new cause for several years, imprisonment in Rome was awarded to him, but as he was allowed during that time to live in his own house, and to receive visitors, he continued his active exertions by preaching and by epistles, and thus he brought his creed also into the capital of the civilized world. It was by this preaching of Paul, and by the combined efforts of his converts, and of some preachers come from Jerusalem, that the Christian religion rapidly increased, especially among the lower classes of the extensive Roman empire.—This rapid increase in number is constantly adduced by the Christians as proof of Divine assistance in their cause, as if everything that meets with favor or patronage of the public is therefore under God's special protection. On the same ground, and with as much a right, we could support that a new fashion of dress, which often, without palpable reason becomes all the rage for a time (though it may subsequently be derided), came of God. Still, when a new fashion of dress comes, and it carries all before it, we trust that no one would dare to claim that its extension is owing to special Divine protection ; why now should we presume that other things that meet with favor and patronage of men should come from God ? With what right

should we do this? The success the Christian religion met with, was brought about in the same way as the success of a new style of dress. The old style not answering the fancy or purpose of the multitude, they wanted something else. The old religion of the Roman empire was not found to answer the purpose of them ultitude, they accordingly wanted something else. Every one began to see that the religion of the Mythology was only an invention of human mind, and they wished something different. The Christian creed came, it was something new, and besides its being new, it had the advantage of condemning the rich and raising the poor into saints. And why should not such a creed find patronage? Why not find patronage in a land where the multitude was poor? The extensive Roman empire contained a few rich, but many were poor. Trade and industry were not flourishing, the empire was essentially military; wealth had thus accumulated in the hands of a few, commanders of the army and governors of provinces. Envy was in the breast of many, even in the breast of the multitude. The preachers of Jerusalem then appeared, they announced that the reign of the Lord was at hand, when the poor would be glorified and live in abundance; but the rich (who could no more go to heaven than a camel could go through the eye of a needle) would be severely dealt with. Those high in authority would march to a pit of fire, but the poor and lowly would be blessed here and hereafter. Blessed were the poor, for them was the celestial kingdom; but woe to the rich, the wicked. Such preaching in the streets and market places by excited men, who pretended to be under inspiration of a divine spirit, had its effects upon the mob. They moreover preached that it was unnecessary to work, but that it was sufficient to confess publicly, that Jesus was the son of God, which ensured bliss everlasting and an admission into the society of the saints, in which society all their earthly goods had to be deposited with the elders, who distributed it among all in equal parts, so that there would be abundance for all. As now the majority of the crowd had nothing to loose, and could consequently only gain by becoming members of the association, and as most of them did not like to work, they readily availed themselves of the opportunity, and many joined. So it came to pass that the society of the saints increased fast. The society lived then all of one accord, that is to say, they lived all off the joint capital furnished by a few simpletons; this lasted then in each community until there was no more. In such emergency the members had to resume working, they, however, were made Christians in the meantime, and the town where they lived could boast of possessing a Christian community. When the state of affairs had assumed that shape, Paul preached to them that it was best to work for bread as he had done himself, and at the same time strenuously pointed out to them that faith alone would save from damnation; the body might sin and be cursed by God after death, but the soul was saved by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and would straightway go to heaven, where a joyful life awaited them. Such teaching was then received, because they had nothing else to belief. Besides this cause of success, there was still another cause which aided in the adoption of the new creed by the masses, namely, that their religion or mythology

was full of gods and demi-gods, the latter being the sons of gods and women, so that they could easily familiarize themselves with the idea of another god who also could have a son in that manner. With the people of rank and learning the Christian religion nevertheless found no favor whatever; several Roman emperors even attempted to crush it out, suspecting in the movement a political tendency under the cloak of religion. Hence the martyrs, now worshipped, who suffered death for their wo-crying against the authorities of the land, and for violating the civil laws. Thus Christian affairs went on, alternately they were persecuted, and left undisturbed, according as they had more or less enthusiastic prophets and teachers, and according to the disposition of the reigning emperors. At last came Constantine (named the great) at the head of affairs (about 330 A. C.) That emperor, though afterwards considered a saint, had committed the greatest cruelties without sufficient provocation; his son Crispus suffered death by his orders, because he wished another son to succeed him. His wife Tamita shared the same fate because he preferred another woman, not to mention numerous other crimes equally horrible; at first the Christians were persecuted by him, but when that monarch had made himself odious, embittering against him as well the Patricians as the Plebeians, so as to jeopardise the continuance of his rule or misrule, he bethought himself of selecting a new capital, Byzantium, for the seat of his government, and then to favor the party of the people (the Plebeians) above that of the Patricians, because the Plebeians were the stronger. The most effective manner to accomplish that object was to make the religion of the Plebeians his own, as this would secure him their confidence and support, he became accordingly a Christian, and proclaimed that those who were not of the new creed could not expect to hold office. From that time the Christian religion ceased to be exclusively the religion of the Plebeians, but became the religion of the state. Priests were appointed by the imperial government, and the Christian doctrine underwent a thorough overhauling, and after being mixed with maxims of the Greek philosophers, it was fashioned in such a manner that it could become a religion in harmony with the civilization as it then existed. And as no office or government patronage could be claimed except by those who professed the religion of the state, it may easily be imagined that its success was established. The Patricians adhered to the several moral codes of the Greek philosophers for some time longer, but such resistance soon ceased, since the government would not protect them. The schools of Greek philosophy gradually diminished, and all the different opinions and creeds were successively merged into the established religion of the state and absorbed by it. Public opinion required now that one should be a Christian, or in other words, it became the general fashion to be so. The Christian religion, in the time of Constantine and his successors, did not extend beyond the limits of the Roman empire, but after a few centuries that empire was dismembered, many of the Romans settled in Gaul (France) and Southern Germany. The Roman civilization had already partly spread over those countries, but now the Roman laws and customs were also introduced there. The native people of those countries thus adopting all

that belonged to Roman civilization, readily adopted the Roman religion too. Being once popular there, it was successively introduced by the sword in all parts of central Europe, and from there in the same way in the north ; thus the whole of Europe was made Christian. And when in later times America was discovered, European colonists went thither, taking with them their religion, and so introduced it in the New World also, and this they did in every place of the Globe where trade and profit invited them to settle. From here we see how this religion spread over the world.

As proof of the divinity of their religion, the Christians point with satisfaction to its spreading over all parts of the Globe, while in fact it only spread among the Europeans and their descendants, that is among the Caucasian race, for not any other race has ever been willing to adopt it generally. The natives of their colonies abhor that religion, with but very few exceptions ; and if a few allow themselves to be converted, it requires a continual bribing, through missionaries societies, to prevent a relapse, so that all the efforts in this matter constantly prove to fail. The non-Christian population of the Globe outnumber the Christians in proportion as five to one, which would show that the field for missionary labor is still very large indeed.—The idea that the Christian religion is indispensable to the civilization of a country, has also taken firm root in the public mind ; that idea originates in the general belief of every nation, as is the case with individuals, that they are in all things superior to their neighbours and more civilized than they. On account thereof it remains unnoticed, that the ancient Romans and Greeks, previous to the introduction of Christianity, enjoyed a higher degree of civilization than when it became generally adopted amongst them. It was ere that religion existed, that their great philosophers and statesmen flourished ; and their literature and lawbooks speak eloquently of the degree of civilization attained by them ; since the Christian religion, the tide set in another direction ; priestcraft ruled, investigation was prohibited, the grossest ignorance and immorality prevailed, and the dismemberment of the State ensued. And what has become of those same countries since ? Nothing but the ruin of old splendour.—That a great part of Europe is now advanced in civilization above the ancients, we do not contradict, but is it the religion that taught them the means (the press, the steam-power, and the telegraph etc.), which gave them this superiority ? Does the bible teach anything of the kind ? No, the bible only gives some contradictory moral precepts, the best of which are even borrowed from the old philosophers. (That God is just, is impartial, and loves all men alike, that He is omnipresent etc., are maxims of the ancient philosophers), if the bible proved such teachings, one might pretend that it promoted the intercourse between the nations ; but this it does not ; even it sends to hell every one that is of other creeds and prohibits all investigation, all exercise of the mind. The bible is therefore more injurious to civilization than beneficial.—The Northern nations, as we stated, commenced to grow in importance ; from the time of the breaking up of the Roman empire, but mark in what manner this development took place under the pressure of false doctrines. No fine arts and no litera-

ture, no industry and no trade; poverty was everywhere; only convents existed, and strong castles whence the lords and their vassals sallied forth to plunder. They were dark times those very christian middle ages, barbarous in the extreme, while the Christian priest ruled; compare them with the times of many centuries previous, in ancient Asia, where countries as India, Assyria, Persia &c. had their civilization, though being no Christians; how different was it in these countries of the Sun-worshippers; luxury and prosperity was general, and its people was peaceful. Even China had its great cities; and cultivated arts and sciences during all those times that the Europeans killed and tortured one another. The barbarism was great in those very Christian countries, yea more repulsive than that of the American Indians, who preferred their idols to the idol-cross. The Christian countries commenced at last to improve, and greater progress was made towards civilization; but since when? only since the heavy yoke of the priesthood has partly been shaken off, since the Reformation. Previous to that period the inhabitants of those countries were nothing more but prisoners in a dark dungeon, and fettered besides. They are now out of the dungeon, but are still fettered; the time can however not be distant that they also will throw off the fetters, and will understand at last what freedom is. They then will despise those bonds of folly, contrived by subtle priestcraft, and with a free mind they shall proceed in civilization.

We propose to show that true civilization, that is civilization not only consisting in bodily comfort, but in a cultivated mind is not possible where a genuine belief in the bible prevails, and shall therefore briefly recapitulate, in the form of abstracts, what that book in reality teaches. (Old and New Testament combined) It teaches:

Ere heaven and earth were created, God existed, and the Spirit of God, (Gen. I.), and (according to John I.) also the Word of God, (the Word according to John, being the same as Son of God.)—How God and the Spirit of God came into existence the bible informs us not.

Those three (God, the Spirit, and the Word) are one, (according to I John VI: 7,) this is to be understood in this sense, we suppose, that three times one is one ($3 \times 1 = 1$).

God has the human form (Gen. 1: 26). The Son of God has the same form and resembles the Father greatly (John XII: 9).

The Spirit of God, also called the Holy Ghost, has the form sometimes of a dove (Luke III: 22), sometimes of flames of fire (Acts II: 3-4), and sometimes that of a man, with white hair and a face of fire and polished brass feet (Revelation I and II: 7, 11, 17, 29.)

God called the Father is almighty; his Son is also almighty, for the Father has surrendered all power to him (Matt. XI: 27, and XXVIII: 18; John III: 35). The Holy Ghost was not almighty, being employed as messenger by both father and son (Mark 1: 10-11 and Acts 1: 8).

God once hit upon the idea to create an earth with man and living crea-

tures, also a heaven. (Genesis 1.)—According to Jewish chronology this must have taken place 5620 years ago.—In five days God created, by the aid of his Word, the earth with all its living creatures (except the man,) and heaven with its millions of globes. (Genesis 1, and John II: 3). On the sixth day God created the man, named Adam, after his own image.

On the seventh day God took rest (Genesis II).—That rest was probably taken in heaven.—Heaven is the firmament above the earth (Gen. 1: 7-8). And that place God had selected for his abode (Isaiah XI: 22, and Matthew VI: 9). In heaven God sits on a throne with his Son on his right hand, also on a throne (Revelation IV: 2; Acts 11: 34; Matthew XXV: 3), and with them is the Holy Ghost. Those thrones are in the clouds (Matthew XXVI: 64; and 1 Thess. IV: 17).

Besides heaven and earth God seems also to have created a hell, where the human souls are to be burned. That hell is located at some distance off heaven (Luke XVI: 23).—According to public opinion somewhere below the earth.

God possesses supreme wisdom, and saw that all was good; he discovered however afterwards that he had made an omission by only creating one person. Adam was therefore caused to fall asleep, when God deprived him of one rib, out of which he constructed woman, in order that man should have a mate. (Gen. II.)

Adam and Eve, the parents of the human family, were placed by God in a delightful paradise under the most favorable circumstances, but in that paradise was also the tree of knowledge, the fruit whereof caused death, and in that tree was the devil, concealed in the shape of a serpent, having the power of speech.

The devil, also called Satan, is one of the children of God, sent on earth to tempt mankind to evil, (Job 1).—He has his residence here below, even in Asia Minor (according to Revelation II: 12-13).

God then had sent Satan for the said purpose; but Adam and Eve being innocent, did not know what was evil; Satan thus soon succeeded, under false pretences, to tempt Eva into eating of the forbidden fruit, and the faithful help-mate then seduced her partner Adam to do the same thing.

God is merciful, states the bible; also he punished Adam and Eve most unmercifully, much worse than they were led to anticipate, and he moreover caused all their descendants, that is all mankind, to be henceforth sinful by giving them an innate inclination towards evil.—This is called the original sin.

God was just, states the bible, he therefore cursed mankind for the sake of that original sin, which he himself had established amongst them. In consequence of that curse, man had much hardship to encounter, and after death his soul was sent to hell. God was magnanimous however, and proposed to better man's prospects, though his vengeance required satisfaction; he was all-powerful and might have granted forgiveness, but this was out of the question; vengeance there should be!

The means which God employed to attain this object of avenge, and give man an opportunity to redeem his soul from punishment, were simple, that is, he in-

tended his much beloved Son, called the Word, to be born of a woman, and when this Son would be a full-grown man, and have visited a few towns announcing that he was the Son of God, he, though innocent, was to be nailed to a wooden cross, and die. On witnessing this death, God's wrath would be partly satisfied, and this would decide him to spare a few chosen human souls from perdition, on condition however of their implicitly believing that the crucifixion of his son Jesus would save them. The souls so saved would be allowed by God to dwell in heaven, where they could occupy themselves with singing with the angels, psalms and hymns, in the praise of God and his Son. They might afterwards return on earth where the Son would establish a heavenly kingdom (Revelation).—Those who would not believe that the crucifixion of Jesus was in remission of their sins, would, as formerly, be sent to hell. (Mark XVI).

In pursuance of this object God selected a man, who was to be the founder of a nation, among whom his Son (the blessing of all nations) would be born and crucified. This chosen man was Abram or Abraham. God blessed him as often as they met, promising that his descendants would be the happiest people on earth.—This people are the Jews.—Several centuries later, now by computation about 1860 years ago, that is : after millions of people, who lived during the 3760 years that the world was supposed to have existed, had been sent to hell, God caused the holy Ghost to overshadow a Jewish virgin, in consequence of which she became pregnant and gave birth to a son named Jesus. This son of the Jewish virgin and the holy Ghost, God recognized as his son, and Jesus, though only adopted, is since called a son of God for the reason stated. This son of God, though half human, was equally perfect and powerful as God notwithstanding, and even more so after his crucifixion, as God did surrender to him all power in heaven and on earth. (Matt. XXVIII : 18).

Jesus, called the Christ by his friends, when about 30 years of age, employed himself as a travelling prophet for a few months, in the neighbourhood of the lake of Galilee, where he taught very useful precepts. As for instance :

That in order to inherit the kingdom of heaven it is necessary to be poor in spirit (Matthew V : 3).

Blessed are those who mourn (Matthew V : 4).

Blessed are they, who suffer and are persecuted for his (Jesus) sake, and they must be thankful for an opportunity to suffer (Matthew V : 10-12).

When one's cheek is smitten, the other cheek should be turned towards the offender to smite that also (Matthew V : 39; Luke VI : 29).

When one's coat is taken away, the cloak should be given in addition (Matthew V : 4).

When one is applied to for a present, or a loan of money, it should be given forthwith (Matthew V : 42; Luke VI : 30).

In order to be a good Christian, all one's earthly good should be given up. (Luke XIV : 33).

All earthly goods should be sold, the proceeds of such sale to go to the poor. (Luke XII : 33.)

Those who desire to be good Christians are required to give at once all they possess to the poor ; if they fail to do so, it will be as impossible for them to obtain admittance into the kingdom of heaven, as it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. (Matthew XIX : 23, Mark X : 25, Luke XVIII : 25.)

Many are called but few are chosen (Matthew. XXII : 14).

Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Luke VI : 20.)

It is not allowed to a Christian to labor, or to care for the necessities of life, for that is heathenish ; it is only necessary to look for the kingdom of heaven, and all that is needed shall be added unto you. (Matthew VI : 25-34).

Those who preach the gospel must be received in whatever house they choose to establish themselves ; they are entitled to hospitality, good treatment, and all they state must be believed implicitly, and their baptism submitted to, in case of disobedience with this command, people so offending are damned to hell-fire everlasting. (Luke X : 5-12 ; Matthew X, 14, 15 ; Mark XVI : 15, 16.)

A disciple of Jesus may reap where he has not sowed. (John VI : 38.)

All what is prayed for from God shall be granted. (Matthew VI. 7, 8 ; Luke XI : 9, 10.)

Implicit faith in the word of God is absolutely required ; and faith renders all-powerful, as for instance to lift up a mountain and cast it into the sea. (Mark XI : 23.)

It is forbidden to a Christian man to look at a woman, for to lust after her would be equal to adultery (Matthew V : 28) ; it is however not forbidden to marry, but in such case divorce is prohibited under any circumstance, as it is God who put those two together (Matthew XIX. 6). Jesus though, did not recommend marriage, and distinctly intimates that Christian men had better not marry, but should get themselves eunuchated. (Matthew XIX : 10-12).

Man should hate his own life (John XII : 25), and love his neighbour as himself. (Mark XII : 31.)

Man should love his enemies and bless those who curse him (Matthew V : 44), but he must hate his father, mother, wife, brother and sister, in order to be a true Christian. (Luke XIV : 26.)

Man should love Jesus, for whoever hates him, hates God also. (John XV : 23.)

A good Christian should cast out devils, speak foreign tongues, take up serpents, drink poison, and lay his hands on sick people. (Mark XVI 17, 18.)

And the conclusion of these sublime doctrines is, that whoever will believe (in the Christ), and have been baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned. (Mark XVI : 16).—Consequently it is not necessary to

follow all these mentioned precepts, since it is sufficient to believe and to be baptized, and salvation is secured.

The Son of God, after having promulgated these precious doctrines, was crucified by a few Jews, with the sanction of God. Those Jews by doing so conferred the greatest possible benefit on mankind; but God the Father thought proper nevertheless to punish the entire Jewish nation for that act.—They were therefore, several years after Jesus and all the apostles had passed away, driven from Judea by the Romans and all the promises and pledges made to their father Abraham were cancelled; and the love of God was transferred upon those pious folks, who had the good fortune to be poor in spirit, and to believe firmly in Jesus (without however possessing the ability of moving mountains.)

After the crucifixion Jesus ascended to heaven, seated on a cloud. He had announced his determination to return soon for a general regeneration of the world; the dead were then to be raised, and those who did not believe in him, he would cast into a pool of brimstone-fire. Satan, the devil in chief, would not share that fate; but he would be bound in hell and loosed in 1000 years, to resume on earth his vocation of tempting mankind. During that period of 1000 years, Jesus proposed to manage himself his heavenly kingdom on earth; and life would be extremely blissful here below, so blissful, that the sun and the moon would no longer shine. Jesus himself would be the light of the world. Seated on a throne of precious stones in New Jerusalem, a city to be lowered from heaven, and constructed entirely of precious stones and gold, he would shine like the sun, and the stars he should hold in his hands. The twelve apostles should each sit on a costly throne around him, and the saints elect should glorify him in their regenerated bodies; and there should be no man or woman amongst them, for they all should be like the heavenly angels, and as they, they should be exclusively occupied in the delightful occupation of singing hymns and psalms in the praise of God and his Son. (vide Revelation.)

Christianity is constantly in the joyful anticipation of that glorious day of the Lord's coming, and occasionally a phenomena in the firmament, or reports of war, are held by many pious people as indicative of the approaching event, the general upsetting of all things human; but alas, Jesus frustrates them of their expectations.

Though we do not desire that this world may come to so frightful an end as the faithful believers expect, we still agree with them so far, as wishing, that a regeneration of mankind were at hand; but a regeneration, not of the body, but of the mind, by casting out the devil of nonsense and superstition unworthy of the state of civilization claimed for the century in which we live. It is only then that the perception, of what true religion is, may be reached, when it will be perceived, that religion should only be founded on truth immutable, and admitting of no controversy. Such truth undoubtedly exist, though we have not found it yet, because the human mind has till now been darkened with a cloud of fables, which cloud it is highly time to remove. Providence gave us a Bible

wherefrom the whole truth, as far as human mind can reach, is to be learned. That Bible is the Book of Nature, and if we study in it, every man according his capacity, we will with united co-operation soon find the axioms on which the whole edifice of truth is based. Then first, we will know religion, and no longer be in fear of heresies, while a book of fictions, as the present bible, will only bring us in error, and make us needless unhappy. Therefore, let us throw away that book of fictions, and let us try to be wiser and happier.

APPENDIX

TO THE

BIBLE EXPOSED.

PREFACE.

Since it would seem to some of the readers of "The Bible Exposed" that the author is an atheist, believing neither in the existence of a Divine power, nor in a life hereafter, nor in anything connected with religion, and whose only intention is to disturb the religious faith of others, perhaps (as they might fancy) out of mere envy, because of their peace of mind, which he, according to them, would not possess—he, for that reason, deems it advisable to add to this work a few pages, containing some ideas of his, and recapitulating the contents of a pamphlet he wrote about a year ago. These pages may prove that the author is merely differing in his views from the public, without disowning, therefore, a Divine providence. According to his ideas, Nature ought to be our holy book, our bible, whereupon we have to base our religion, for it reveals truths of unmistakeable Divine origin, while the so-called holy scriptures contain nothing but cant and fables, so plainly of human origin, that we must be blind not to perceive it. Yet, the author would not have meddled with what others choose to think, were it not that he plainly sees that society is not happy under the dominion of that book of lies; people are constantly disturbed by all kinds of superstitious apprehensions, and receive moreover a very diseased notion about the right and wrong of their acts; hence an unnatural state of feeling exists in society, which is highly detrimental, not only to the happiness of the individual, but also to the progress of human civilization. Such being the author's opinion, he feels justified in giving his own reflections, which are chiefly based upon what we observe in Nature; not that he would thereby presume to reveal the mysteries of creation, but, by giving his views, will cause others to think for themselves, and will make them understand that there can be religion without the so-called holy scriptures. Furthermore by adding those pages, he purposes to silence the reproach, that, while trying to pull down the biblical religion, he would leave nothing in its stead. This cannot be said now, as he gives in its stead some plain and tangible principles of moral philosophy.—Thus, without pretending that the ideas proposed should all be correct, the author thinks they will be nearer the truth than those old notions which are based on mere fiction; and, accordingly, while admitting that they require improvements, he leaves the latter to be brought about by men more learned in natural philosophy than himself, in case they will deem these ideas worth their notice.

SOME NEW IDEAS

CONCERNING

The Origin of the Universe,

IN RELATION TO NATURAL RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

M A T T E R .

It is apparent to us that there exists a world (the Universe) constituted of thousands upon thousands of things, all of which, whatever form they may have, consist of material substances (matter).

That they are composed of material substances, we know by experience, because we are taught that it is a property of matter to occupy space, and to be palpable to our senses, either naturally or with the aid of instruments; and as all things surrounding us answer to that property, it therefore must be matter.

How matter came to exist, we are not told, and the only way to come to the knowledge thereof will be by tracing it with the aid of our reason, which nature evidently gave us that we might see by means of it that which is concealed from our eyesight.

To begin the inquiry, then, without taking anything for granted which is not proved, let us imagine for a moment that there was a time when nothing of all we perceive, existed.—We stop at last, and discover something we cannot suppose away, and that we must admit as having existed before everything that is formed, to wit: *Space*.

Space (the expanse of the Universe) possesses no limits, for if it were supposed to have limits, our natural understanding would tell us distinctly that there must be space again on the other side of those supposed limits. Space, therefore, necessarily is illimited.

Since space is without limits, it neither can have a beginning, for supposing it to have had a beginning (for instance that it had commenced to grow from one point, extending itself in every direction) then, no matter how rapidly it

might have been (and might still be) gaining in extent it would always be limited at the outer-surface ; but as we perceived that space has no limits whatever, it can for that reason have no beginning.—That which has no beginning must necessarily have existed forever. Space, therefore, is eternal ; that is, is an ever-existing product of Necessity.

We are accustomed to look upon eternal space as upon a something devoid of all substance, we might say as upon an extensive “nothing.” Supposing, however, space to be in reality nothing, then it should not exist, nor should it have any extent ; but we know that it does exist, because we see it, and measure its distances with our eye-sight. This fact shows that space occupies room, and that it is palpable to our senses ; it possesses consequently the very property of matter ; hence we are obliged to conclude that space is a material substance.—It may be that the matter of which it consists, appears rather unsubstantial to our human ideas, yet this does not alter the fact that space is matter.

In the infinite space we observe many objects which would appear to us to be made of very different matter, but since we have found that space has no limits, and occupies all the room existing, it follows from this that no other matter could have been brought into it, as there exists no other space from whence it could come. Observing furthermore (as the study of nature shows) that every thing which comes into formation is formed out of some substance already in existence, we are forced to the conclusion that all the objects which we perceive in space, must have been formed out of the matter of which space itself consists. Space, therefore, is the primitive substance, *the original matter*, out of which everything is made.

Space is eternal, thus also matter, of which everything is made, is eternal, and like space, a product of Necessity.

CHAPTER II.

THE IMMATERIAL.

When gazing around us, we perceive that the original matter has undergone, and is still undergoing, many changes, producing and reproducing all kinds of forms, or objects. This shows us that there is a power of formation in matter, which astonishes us, since we do not see the cause of that power, and yet, our natural understanding leads us to suppose that no changes can occur without a cause.

Now, to discover that cause, we are obliged to trace it from its effect upon matter ; and there again we have to employ our intellect and to consult our knowledge of the laws of nature, which man learns from experience.

Our knowledge of the laws of nature, teaches us that matter is essentially inert ; there being an inability to change its state in all (unorganized) sub-

stances, unless compelled thereto by something else independent of it, thus confirming the fact that every effect requires a corresponding cause.

The original matter, being primitive, was an uncomposed (simple) substance, yet the objects which we discover in nature, are (as science teaches us), formed of matter in a compound state; that is, formed of combinations of elements which may be resolved again.—Then, how, from that simple substance, may combinations of elements have come forth?

If the original matter had been divided into two distinct parts, let us say into positive and negative atoms, then, it might be, that these, by getting united in different proportions, could have caused different compounds or forms, to come forth; but again, to divide the original matter, as mentioned, some other thing independent of it was required.

There must, consequently, have existed in space something else; but, this could not have been of material substance, since we saw, that there was no space left for other matter. What then, may it have been; something existing and yet possessing no substance?—Is there in space anything of the kind?—Yes, there is, that which we call : *Time*.

That time exists, but requires no (perceptible) place, is generally known. Time can therefore not be said to be material, since we call matter only that which occupies space, and therefore we must call it an immaterial element or principle.—Time here alluded to is not so much that which we count by hours and days, as they are but trifling atoms of what we are speaking, which is the eternal time, comprising within itself the beginning and the end.

That time can have had no more a beginning than space, needs no demonstration, for it is plain that since matter is naturally inert, space, while left alone, could never have produced time, hence the latter must have existed without ever having been brought forth, that is, it must have existed, like space, in all eternity, as a product of Necessity.

Whereas, then, time is immaterial in its nature, and has existed eternally, even previous to anything possessed of form or life (since without time no existence is possible), we therefore deem ourselves justified in calling the eternal time : *the original immaterial*.

Now, when we behold the changes which the original matter (space) has undergone, and observe in the study of the natural sciences (especially of Chemistry) that the changes of form in matter, are chiefly caused by the union of opposite elements, are we not then to conclude that it was the union of the original immaterial with the original matter, that caused the latter to change its primitive state?

We will more readily come to this conclusion when we remember that beside time there existed nothing in space to induce it to change. And moreover, since we discover throughout nature a positive and negative principle, counterbalancing each other, and having the tendency to unite (we discover it most plainly in the imponderable substances, as electricity, galvanism, etc., though the same tendency exists in everything in nature), must we not confess

that these primitive elements, time and space, are as fit to counterbalance one another as are the positive and negative in electricity and other substances ?

Time and space both existed forever ; both, if left alone would be nothing, or rather could not exist, while united they form eternity ; the one, as it were, eternity in length, the other in depth. On the other hand, the one is occupying all space in existence, while the other is occupying no visible space at all. Space on account of its occupying place being palpable to our senses, is for us a positive something, while time, on account of its occupying no visible place, is to our senses a negative something. They are in fact, positive and negative existing principles ; and must be as fit to unite as are the positive and negative in electricity.

Many will object to our argumentation, on the ground that since neither of the two above named principles is gifted with intellect, neither of them could ever have thought of uniting with the other. This remark would be just, if a separate place had been allowed to each of the two principles ; for in such a case they would have remained asunder for ever, but now, that they were both placed in the same space, and the original matter was occupying all space for herself, the case is very different, for the original immaterial having no place, was compelled to introduce itself into the original matter, though it was not possessed of understanding ; it was Necessity which compelled it to do so.

By so doing, time pervaded space, and brought her in motion ; and motion, we know, is the beginning of all changes.

(The believer in the bible-god will be shocked at our regarding Necessity as the source promoter of the primary motion, but he must bear in mind that even imagining a God as coming forth of his own accord in the very beginning of eternity, a primary motion must always be supposed of which no God could have control.)

CHAPTER III.

STATE OF THE ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES UNITED.

The first effect of the said primary motion seems to have been that the original matter divided into atoms, (of course, atoms so minute even to be imagined,) while the immaterial took place between the atoms.

Matter however being essentially impenetrable, it strove to resume its former dissolved state, but in this strife it did not succeed, because of the immaterial element which also strove to retain the usurped place, and encircled the atoms. The consequence of this continued contest seems to have been that the atoms became, one part positively, the other part negatively, affected ; perhaps this depended on their being some of them more, others less encircled by the immaterial element.

Positive and negative atoms still striving to return to their primitive state, attracted one another, and united.—Space, as we perceive it now, consists most likely of matter in that secondary state, and which is called ether. Since original matter was a simple substance, and this one a compound of atoms, there is of course, a difference between the two.

Some matter made more complicated combinations, by the atoms joining in a different order. This caused, at first, an imponderable substance to be formed, which by new combinations with other matter produced at length matter in an æriform state. This again making new combinations, and perhaps also by getting more condensed by pressure of surrounding matter, brought forth matter in a liquid state; till at last, by new combinations, this again produced solid matter.—This solid matter we perceive floating in infinite space in the shape of heavenly bodies; of which the earth is one.

The reason that not all matter existing passed through the same evolution, must be looked for in the circumstance, that there exists in matter not only the force of attraction, (of which we spoke) but also a force of repulsion. Both these forces in matter are consequences of it being divided into positive and negative, for, while the atoms of opposite qualities attract one another, those of the same quality repulse each other.

Now these two forces are constantly counterbalancing each other, so as to remain in equilibrium. Yet, it seems, that in the formed substance the attractive force has the supremacy, while in the unshaped matter (space) the repulsive force has acquired the supremacy.

The force of repulsion exists, however, also in the formed substance, and it is this force which prevents the atoms, and particles, from coming into perfect contact, so that there is no substance known on earth which has no open spaces or pores, within itself. (Even the liquids, though seemingly without open spaces, are constituted of minute globules which do not perfectly touch each other.) Likewise, as we discover pores (space) in solid bodies, though the atoms of which they are constituted are possessed of the power of attraction, so in reverse we discover solid bodies in infinite space, though the principal seat of the repulsive force; and on that account remaining in a more primitive state.

The forces of attraction and repulsion (though commonly called properties of matter) are probably caused by two unponderable fluids, parts of the very first products of the union of the primitive elements; we shall give them the name of magnetism of gravity, and of repulsion.

These imponderable substances appear to possess the property of elasticity to the very highest degree, (perhaps because their atoms are so nicely balanced by a system of attraction and repulsion that they resist the greatest force brought to bear upon them.) The magnetism of gravity holds together all formed substance existing in infinite space. It holds together the heavenly bodies, and, again, it holds the particles of these bodies bound to their centre. It is evident therefrom that this invisible fluid reaches from one body to the other, whatever

the distance may be, and pervades them all, tying them thereby together as with infrangible strings.

Thus, as before mentioned, the heavenly bodies were formed of space; if they did not all attain the same size, it was because the distances varied which the particles had to go traverse in order to join the other particles for which they had affinity. [The affinity, we mention here, is a variation of the power of attraction, caused by the co-operation of electricity (another imponderable fluid), in consequence of which a substance will show a preference to unite with some other substance.] In consequence thereof these bodies were of different shapes and dimensions, according to the lesser or larger quantity of other formed substance they chanced to meet with.

These heavenly bodies, though attracting to themselves the less important substances coming near them, assumed fixed positions; for, being all attracted, the one by the other, each in proportion to its size, density, and distance, (according to the laws of gravity) it caused that, since the attraction was coming from every direction, they all were kept at limited distances.

These bodies were brought in motion by the repulsive force which is in space; their motion however would have been irregular, were it not for their mutual attraction, which gave it a regulated direction, which is called the centrifugal motion of the globes.

It is thus the principle of mutual attraction, which prevents the planets from joining the sun, and again it is this same principle which prevents the sun from joining other solar systems, which, without doubt, would take place, if, in their motion, the globes were left at liberty to go thither where their individual attraction was drawing them.

Since, then, it is understood that the mutual attraction of the globes is the cause of their regular motion, we derive from this a very important fact, with respect to the date of creation of the Universe.—To wit: if only a part of the infinite space was occupied with heavenly bodies, the mutual attraction would not keep them in their respective courses; for, as is plain, the globes placed at the outer-limits of such occupancy, not feeling themselves held back on one side, they would draw nearer to the centre of that occupancy; the next row of globes, feeling themselves no longer restrained would also follow; the row of globes, next after this, would do the same; and so on, until the whole starry firmament would form but one solid mass; seeing now that this does not happen, have not we, on that account, to conclude that all infinite space is filled with globes?

Infinite space being all over occupied by globes, it follows from this that the number of globes required thereto must also be infinite; since a finite number would not suffice to fill an infinite space.

The number of globes being infinite, there can, of course, never have been a beginning to their number; and from this follows, that space must in all eternity have held an illimited number of heavenly bodies; which shows that the Universe

with globes is eternal in its existence; also, as long as time and space were together, they must have produced the same effect.

If we first considered space as being void, we did so in order to lead the reader, by degrees, to our point of view.—And if we say that the Universe is eternal, we do not mean by that, that every individual globe should be eternal; as this is not our opinion; we think it will be with the heavenly bodies as with all other things in nature, they will all by turn get old and decay, and become dissolved, while new ones will arise in their stead.

Since now we have seen that the original matter underwent a change of form on account of the union with the original immaterial, we cannot do otherwise than suppose that the latter underwent also a change, proportionate to that of the other; for, as both these elements have the same origin (necessity) they will probably also have similar properties, though these may differ in appearance as much as do these elements. Which may be the change that the original immaterial (eternal time) underwent, we of course could not decide, since that element is intangible to our senses.

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNIVERSE, AND THE DIVINE BEING.

The Universe, as we have explained in the preceding pages, is not as is commonly believed, a vacuum, wherein a countless number of loose bodies are scattered, but is a coherent whole.—Space between the heavenly bodies is not devoid of matter, since space is matter itself; and the bodies which seem to us to be loose, suspended on nothing, are not loose, but are tied together with strings, stronger than any that could be made of visible material. These strings of magnetism of gravity, while connecting all the heavenly bodies, form a network through the whole infinite space, of which these globes are but the knots. The globes have also communication with one another by beams of light, which reach from one globe to the other; showing us that every one of them is not a body existing by itself, but that all belong to one another, forming one great system.

We see in the animal economy a net-work of nerves spread through the whole system, there we consider those threads of nerves destined to convey to the brain all the sensations of the creature. Now in the system of the Universe we also discover threads spread in all directions, yet here we deem them of no account, for, the Universe, they say, is only a lifeless piece of mechanism. But let us see whether the Universe is lifeless or not.—Do we not see motion in all its parts; do we not see light and warmth diffused everywhere, and does not everything belonging to the Universe undergo natural changes? Can we say of such a system that it is lifeless? No. it lives, as much as any of its creatures

do. If the Universe was merely a piece of mechanism then it ought to have some mechanical machine to keep it in motion, but this is not the case ; it moves of its own accord, and therefore it lives.

The Universe, taken as a whole, is a system of functions ; we might say it constitutes one great body. Indeed, it is a bodily organization animated with life, and having a circulation, if not of blood, of a substance (the ether) much more subtle than blood, and having sinews and nerves (the threads of magnetism of gravity and the beams of light), not roughly constructed ; but of a tender substance sensible to the slightest sensation. It is a body full of vitality, with the light of life beaming from every part. True, it is not like an earthly body, with limited forms, but notwithstanding this it is a living body (a living system) ; and if its form is unlimited, it is because it is the embodiment of what is infinite, the Embodiment of eternity ; and the Soul thereof, is the eternal time.

Many persons, on hearing this reasoning, will object, by observing that this body has no head, neither organ to think with, nor organs to see, to feel, or to hear with.—Such an objection is easily made, but let us ascertain whether there are really none of the organs requisite to constitute a living and thinking being. In the first place, do we not know that beams of light retain the received impressions and reflect them in whatever direction they go (we observe this from the Camera obscura, the daguerreotype, etc.), they, accordingly, reflect from one heavenly globe to the other whatever transpires on them. They (the globes) perform thereby the functions of the eyes. And further, did we not discover that from one globe to the other, threads of magnetism of gravity are extended ; may not they perform the functions of nerves by conveying the feeling from one part of that great organism to another ? That they actually are sensitive, and that in a high degree, may be observed from the circumstance that we cannot move the least object from its place, without always discovering that gravity is there, never failing to mind every motion.

Ears, we see none, but these, a being having so many eyes and such sensitive nerves, can easily dispense with.—But, how is it with the brain ?—Do we, when we look around us, not discover regularity in all that exists, and a design in everything ; does not this design prove a thinking power ? and when we scrutinize more particularly the higher products of nature, do we not discover that they are formed with a judgment and skill, compared with which all human science is nothing ? It is obvious on that ground that there exists in the Universe a consciousness of its existence and of everything belonging to it. Moreover, if we will but notice that we ourselves are enabled to think by means of the skillful manner in which our brain is constructed, would not this alone be sufficient to make us understand that the power which thus formed our organ for thought must have known what thinking was, for else how, by any possibility, could it have conceived the construction of an organ for that purpose ?

Thus nobody can deny that there exists a superior intelligence in the Universe. This intelligence, however, cannot be said to reside in the sun, nor in the moon, nor in the clouds, nor in any special place, for, if it had any special

abode, we would long since have perceived from what direction its decrees emanate ; but, on the contrary, we perceive that it resides everywhere, throughout the Universe. Where, then, is the mind to be found from which this supreme intelligence proceeds ? This mind has no other place than the whole Universe, or, in other words, the Universe itself must be the Brain (the craniological structure) from which this intelligence emanates. It is in vain that man searches for any other origin of that thinking power, he will find none ; while he has only to lift up his eyes, and beholding the great Whole (the starry sky and all nature around him) he beholds but one great laboratory of thoughts.

Some philosophers have supposed that this supreme intelligence was produced without an organ of thought ; the Deity, according to them consists in a spiritual (with which they mean invisible) essence, which pervades all space.— But, how can they suppose that an unformed essence should in itself possess the power of thinking ? Are thoughts not produced by the motions of a certain systematical and material structure, which we call brain ? This brain, when united with an invisible and imponderable principle, acquires that peculiar motion, which by causing a kind of reverberation of its constituent parts, has the effect of producing thoughts. We can not suppose thoughts to exist without an organ to produce them and to retain them ; and therefore, we conclude that a peculiar construction of the Universe is necessarily required to enable the Deity to think.

The firmament, then, with all its infinite number of globes, is not made for our benefit alone, but has a higher destiny. The intelligence that control all creation, proceeds from it. The Universe thus proves to be the great organ for thought, *th : Infinite brain*, from which the primary wisdom comes forth.

The Universe is, moreover, as we already stated, an infinite bodily organization ; it is, accordingly, both the body and the brain of an Infinite being. This being possesses no organ like ours ; but the only organs it requires are those wherewith to be conscious of all what exists, through all eternity ; and behold, its whole body consists only of organs for that purpose.

Here, then, we contemplate the bodily structure of a being, eternal in existence, and omnipresent, and omniscient from the very nature of its organization. Must not this being be the Ruler of all the Universe, the being which we vaguely called God without knowledge of what we meant ? The priests of the false religion preach a god who hides himself from us ; they preach a god who is almighty ; a god who takes a fancy for those that coax him, while treating others in the most cruel manner. Now this God of the Universe that we describe, does not conceal his countenance from our view, we may look up towards him day and night, and the more we study his countenance, the more we wonder at his greatness and wisdom, and the better we understand his laws. And although this God may not be what they call almighty, since he himself has to obey the laws of Necessity, he is at least righteous and impartial towards his creatures. The idol, the never-seen bible-god, wherewith priests frighten their dupes, is on the other hand, depicted as being partial in all his acts.

CHAPTER V.

THE WORLD'S CREATURES. (PLANTS AND ANIMALS.)

From what we saw in Chapt. III., the fact of matter and immaterial being united, caused in matter this property that its atoms and combinations of atoms continually strive to join one with the other, so as to make new combinations; we might call that property, the chemical life of matter, it being a vital property which we discover in all, and even in otherwise inanimate substances, and where-with we soon become acquainted by chemical experiments. It was by this primary property of matter (brought into it by necessity) that the heavenly bodies grew out of space.

We further discover that out of these bodies (judging by what we see on earth) there arose a new and still more complicated combination of the immaterial and material elements of which these globes are constituted.—These new and more complicated combinations possess (besides this chemical life which they have in common with all matter) a still higher degree of life, which makes them less dependent on the mentioned primary property of matter, by giving it another property (which we call life) of its own.—These combinations are called the live-creation.

The first products of live-creation on earth, were the plants; at first very plain in organization, still more intricately constructed (or organized) than are the combinations of other (lifeless) matter, which we call minerals, etc.—From those first plants, others, with a higher organization, seem to have originated.

That the Supreme intelligence, which exists in the Universe (and of which we spoke in the preceding chapter) must have guided the construction of these products, is to be deduced from their organized structure, as a careful observation of the skillful, we might say scientific, manner in which they are constructed (inwardly in particular) proves at once that the blind property of matter was not sufficient to produce such effects. It was, it is true, the vital property of matter which caused the formation of combinations of matters, but it was the Supreme intelligence that guided and controlled the formation and brought it to that perfection which we discover therein.

In plants, as in all other products of the live-creation, we perceive that the material part of it undergoes changes, it becomes organic matter during its process of life, that is, during its being united to its immaterial part.

The immaterial part of a living thing will, for that reason, be undergoing changes also, for by an extended study of nature we learn that the same laws rule throughout nature, though the effects thereof be not always the same. What the change will be that the immaterial of a living thing undergo, we cannot define, though we know that a change will take place.

The plants of which we spoke, after having reached the highest state of perfection to which their organization fitted them, died off, that is were decomposed, the matter and immaterial of their composition parted asunder, and their material form dissolved, returning to the surface of the globe.

The immaterial part of the plant, being of an opposite polarity (one positive, the other negative) will, in all probability, have returned to the centre of the globe.—The globe being produced by a combination of matter and immaterial, will, we presume, hold a certain quantity of latent immaterial element, of which we may regard the centre of the globe to be the principal seat. From out of that place the latent immaterial is able to dart its rays towards the surface in every direction.

Now these returning rays, or germs, of the immaterial of the globe, having undergone a change by their union with matter, will have been no longer fit to remain united with the rest of latent immaterial, and hence they will have been emitted again towards the surface. Arriving there they again formed new combinations with the altered matter (the organic matter) of the surface.

These new combinations of altered matter and immaterial brought forth new forms once more; forms possessed of a still higher degree of life than that of plants; showing this property by being in a still less degree dependent on the primary property of matter. These forms are possessed of organs of sensation, and move freely; we call them animals.

The animal-creation becoming, by degrees, more and more organized, or perfected, in the same manner as was the case with the plants; old generations dying away and new ones arising on their ashes—arrived at last at that state of progression we now behold it in, producing man.—Man is a creature still less dependent on the primary property of matter than are animals, since he is possessor of a greater power of reason, which to a certain extent controls matter.

Seeing now that in the course of nature everything develops itself by degrees, we must not suppose that the before mentioned series of creatures should have come forth spontaneously out of the ground, for if such did once happen, it would happen now, which it does not; we, accordingly act wisely in presuming that when a generation of beings had reached the highest pitch its organism was fit for, some creature was born out of it, differing but little, still somewhat superior to its progenitors.—The animal-creation thus developing itself in different directions, has brought forth that great variety of creatures we now behold, and also man.

That perhaps thousands of years have been requisite to produce a distinct class of animals, and perhaps millions of years to conduct the animal kingdom to its present state, is more than likely, on account of the comparative slowness wherewith lasting changes take place in nature.—Geologists likewise assert that the earth must have existed several millions of years.

The temperature and atmosphere of the globe are, though imperceptibly to us, gradually changing. The crust of the earth is getting colder, and the atmosphere is losing of its oxygen, while getting richer in carbonic acid; that this change has, and will still, co-operate to modify the forms of the animal-kind, is not to be doubted, since an animal fit to live on earth a million of years ago, would perish if it were now again placed there.

Yet, as the change here mentioned does not take place all over the earth in

the same time or proportion, it has caused many species of animals to remain in existence in some special region, where the climate had remained more favorable for them, though the rest of their species, inhabiting the other parts of the world, died out. Thus we see that every region has its own species of animals. Man alone inhabits now all parts of the world, and that is, because it is his age; but, after the lapse of a few more thousand years, and perhaps in less time, another and superior race of creatures will have taken his place; and the few men that may still exist will also be compelled to inhabit their special region.

That the production of the live-creation was not the work of the property of matter alone, we already stated; for there is plainly to be perceived, from the systematical organism of the creature, and from the regular chain towards perfection, which the animal kingdom represents, a design to some aim, which proves a thinking power.—The property of matter caused the formation of things, but the Wisdom which rules in the Universe supervised and directed that formation, and hence that wonderful construction.

CHAPTER VI.

MAN.

The aim towards which the Supreme wisdom seems to conduct the earthly live-creation, appears to be the production of a being in which the power of its material and immaterial parts counterbalance each other, that is, are in equilibrium.

The animal kind, as now existing, is still very dependent on the power of the matter, to which it bodily belongs. However, we notice in the chain which the live creation creates, a tendency towards progression, for, while we find, at the beginning of the chain, creatures almost as dependent on the property of matter as are the lifeless minerals, we find the last link of that chain to be a creature already much less dependent. That creature is man.²—Man, though the most perfect being for the present, has, however, not yet reached the aim spoken of.

In order that the creature should reach that aim, it seems to have been necessary to bring the immaterial part of the earthly creation, gradually, to higher stages of development, as if it were to strengthen its power against the power of matter.

This was done by re-uniting the returning germs of immaterial element (whenever they parted with their material form) with new forms—forms of a superior organisation, and gradually possessed of a superior organ of reason. The latter in particular seems to be of importance, since it proves to be the principal seat of the immaterial part of the creature, as it is through that organ that the immaterial part commands the body.

Thus the immaterial part of an animal, when parting with the body, will re-

turn to the centre of the globe, so as to be emitted again towards the embryo of another creature, of a superior structure, or to one of such a structure which that immaterial spark will be fit for.

That the immaterial part must be undergoing a change when united with a body, we already observed ; but the change is not to be determined. However, let us suppose that it retains a kind of impression (of course an impression of which we can form no idea) caused by the sum total of all what the creature experienced, or felt, during its career of life. The immaterial germ having of itself no brain, it will (this we are aware of) not be able to retain recollection as a thinking creature does, but therefore also we only call it an impression. In the same way we see electro-magnetism carrying our messages by receiving impulses, yet without being able to think for itself.

The immaterial germ, when re-united with a body, and having again an organ of thought at its disposal, may transfer its impressions to that organ, and thus cause what we call instinct in the animal, and innate sense (part of which we call conscience) in man. Men and animals naturally know many things that they never learnt ; it is therefore not at all impossible that such knowledge is the result of experience retained from a series of by-gone lives.

The circumstances attending such experience man does not remember, because he is not possessed of an organ fit to dissect them, yet it may be that creatures of a higher order possess such an organ, and that they will know what came to pass with them in their previous lives.

Whether the immaterial germ, when leaving the body of a dying creature, does return to that of a new-to-be-born one, without having undergone any new change during the time of its being separated from the body, we are unable to state ; yet, when observing that there is in nature a tendency to form combinations, and that there is a positive and negative in all things, which strive to get into a state of equilibrium, we do not consider it in the least impossible that the germ coming from a male creature and being, let us say, positively affected, should unite to that coming from a female creature, being negatively affected. These two combined might form the immaterial germ for that new creature of a higher order, which again would be either positive, or negative, according to certain rules unknown to us.

This theory, which may appear odd, would nevertheless explain how it comes that we see so many more creatures of a very inferior order than of a higher one. For instance, fish are countless in number ; insects still more so, and infusoria still more ; now, if we take the number of this first product of animal life, diminishing at the rate of two to one (as would be the case according to this view), at every higher stage of life the germs would have to go through, then the number would have become comparatively small by the time they were fit to be united to the body of reasonable creatures.

The immaterial part of man, generally called soul, proceeds therefore probably from a combination of immaterial germs of earthly creatures of a lower order. And when man dies, the soul will proceed, becoming, in the same man-

ner, the soul of a still superior creature ; of a creature yet more gracefully formed and possessed of more and better organs of senses, so that it will be enabled to perceive much more of what is happening in nature than man now does.

Seeing, however, that no such creature exists on earth, the human soul must proceed towards some other globe, which is in a more advanced state of progression than our earth is at present.—Thus the immaterial germ in man, after becoming disengaged from the body, will first be attracted to the centre of the globe, and from there be repulsed towards the surface, but as there is on the surface no organism able to attract it, it will be attracted by some other globe, for instance by the sun. On its way thither it has the threads of magnetism of gravity of the sun to serve it as a conducting medium. And if on that globe there are also no creatures whose organism is able to attract it, it will be repulsed again and darted out towards some other planet, where there are creatures existing whose organism is in accordance with the state of progression of that germ.

We are aware that these propositions will sound strange to many, in particular to those who never studied anything of natural philosophy, yet if they did study it, they would come to the knowledge that everything in nature happens according to fixed laws, and that therefore the immaterial principle of a creature, when leaving the body, must be sent somewhere according to some rule, and directed by some conducting medium.—And what concerns its being first attracted and then repulsed again, this might seem incongruent, yet we see the same thing happening with electricity ; an excited electric will first attract little objects, but after having kept them for some time, that object gets itself electrified by the contact, and it is then repulsed again. Why should not the same thing take place in the immaterial world as we see it in the material ?—This theory is therefore not so unreasonable or incompatible with the laws of nature as is the common belief that souls should fly towards some unknown sphere, without any conducting medium ; and be there living, thinking beings, though possessing neither body nor brains. If one of the two suppositions needs demonstration, it is surely the latter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ANIMALS.

Man, as we described in the preceding pages, is superior to the other creatures of this earth ; yet he belongs to the animal kind, but, at the same time, we may say, on account of his having greater power of reason, man is the flower of the animal kingdom.

The difference between man and animal is, however, not so exceedingly great as people often imagine ; for the brute also has an immaterial principle within it which does not die. And then considering how many men make no more use of their reason than does the brute, or if they do use it, they only do it to satisfy

their brutal, selfish purposes, so that it were better for society if they had no reason at all, we must confess that there are animals that are actually superior to such men.

That the animal has an immaterial principle (or soul) within him, is generally disbelieved, on the ground of the brute not having as much reason as man; people, however, would do well to observe that the faculty of reason emanates from the brain; that the more perfectly the brain is organised, the more perfect the intellect will be; the brute now, having but an imperfectly organised brain, not nearly as much developed as that of man, cannot have the same intellect, notwithstanding it has a soul.—And besides this, the brute being deprived of hands and of the power of speech, was never able to progress in civilization, or to make use of its intellect in the same proportion as man.—If man from the beginning of his existence had been obliged to walk on four feet, and had been unable to communicate his experience by language, he would until this day, not have been any further advanced in civilization than the brute.

Further, we notice that the life of the brute is based on the same principles as that of man, so that if we maintain that the brute needs no soul to live, we maintain that man needs none either. Do we not see that the brute comes into the world and dies as men do; it feels joy and grief; it sleeps and dreams and awakes just as man does; why then should we maintain that it had no soul, while man should have one?

The life of an animal, whatever it be, cannot be brought forth by the body alone; for if this were the case, why should not an animal, when killed in such a manner that the body is not injured, commence to live again as soon as the obstacle, which caused its death, was removed? yet this is not the case.—Even admitting that the animal body is a piece of mechanism, still that machine must be kept going by some other thing independent of it; now that other thing is leaving the body when the animal dies, there is no doubt of that; nevertheless it departs without that we can lay hold of it, as it is impalpable to us, and cannot be said to occupy space; does not this prove that that something is not material but immaterial? Hence we infer that the principle which by its union with the body causes the life in the animal, is of an immaterial nature.

This immaterial principle when departing from the body is not destroyed either, for the study of nature teaches man that nothing, which has an actual existence, gets lost. It may be removed, and lose its form, but its substance remains in existence. It is only the effects, or phenomenon, caused by actual existing things, which cease to exist, but not the things themselves. Life is a phenomenon, and may come to an end, but that which caused life must continue to exist; for though it may depart, it must go somewhere, and it cannot get out of the universe, since that is unlimited. As an illustration of life, we may take the light of a candle: the light may be blown out, but that which produced the light, the carbon and hydrogen of the candle, and the oxygen of the atmosphere, which by their union brought forth that appearance, are still existing, though the light be blown out; they are diffused in the air in the shape of carbonic-acid

gass.—As with the light, so it is with the life of the animal : you may extinguish the life, but that which caused the life cannot be destroyed. The life was brought forth by the union of the body with an immaterial principle; now the substance of the body cannot be destroyed, though it loses its form, and in like manner the immaterial principle cannot be destroyed, though it may change in form. The same laws rule all nature.

For these reasons we have to take it for granted that every animal has an immaterial principle within, which, though inferior in quality to the soul of man, is nevertheless immortal, and also made for progression, since the general tendency in nature is such.

The reason why so many creatures are made, and why they are so differently shaped, has often been a puzzling question for thinking minds, and the reason is hardly to be explained. It has been said, that creatures are embodiments of the thoughts of God; and this they are, no doubt, but yet this does not explain why these embodiments exist; for to see them eat, or drink, or to see them move, cannot be of much utility to that Being, we should think; we, on that account, hazard the supposition that their higher developed organs, those of thought and of sensation, may be useful for him. For it may be that the earth, and likewise all the other globes, would be like dead bodies, without sensation, if there were no creatures to produce feeling in the same; and the globes form parts of the Divine body.

We know, for instance, that all creatures are bound to the globe by its attractive power, coming from the centre, that is (as we call it) by threads of magnetism of gravity. All that the creature thinks and feels may be reported along those threads towards the centre of the globe, and thus the sensation of all creatures, the sum-total of which may form the sensation of the earth. This globe again is connected with the sun, also by threads of the same substance, and the sun again is connected with other suns of other solar systems; in that way there is a connection all over the universe, and the sensation of every globe (for other globes will also have their creatures) may be reported thereby throughout the universe. Now these infinite number of sensations, may not they, perhaps, constitute, or serve to perfect, the thoughts of the All-supreme?—If this should be the case, the creatures are little movable organs of sensation of the globes, necessary to produce feeling in these bodies.

Accordingly, if the creatures (those moving organs of sensation) are variously shaped, it will be with them as with our organs of sense. Our ears are differently shaped from our eyes, and our nose from our mouth, and that is, because they have different functions to fulfil, and thus it may be that one creature is differently shaped from the other, because it has different functions to fulfil, that is, different sensations to convey in the great economy of the Divine body.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SIN.

We discover in man (because he has more reason, otherwise we should discover it in the brute also) two impulses, according to which he acts. They are often in direct opposition; one inciting him to act in one way, the other in another. These impulses are caused by his being constituted of two elements of opposed qualities, matter and immaterial; they both give their own impulses to his brain. Now the impulses being at variance, the stronger of the two will prevail.

Both matter and immaterial, of which the creature is constituted, make their desires known, as we said, through the brain. One part of the brain, which proves to be the seat of reason, seems to be chiefly regulated by the immaterial principle, while its other parts are more under the control of the material element.

We have seen, in the preceding pages, that it is a property of matter to endeavor to improve and to multiply its form; and it tries to attain that, regardless of the consequences; for, matter, possessing no reason, acts blindly.

It is on account of that property of matter that the creature takes food and drink, and procreates; and in order to obtain these, the creature does often not look whether the consequences bring on harm or not, acting therein as blind matter would do.

The reason which man possesses (and through which his immaterial principle speaks) disapproves of such acts whereby the creature harms, either himself, or other creatures of that body (mankind) of which he himself is a member.—It does not disapprove of those acts requisite to keep the body in a healthy state; for since the body is material, it must have its material exigencies by the law of necessity; but it disapproves of the creature yielding to the demands of matter more than is compatible with his own or other people's well-being.

Reason disapproving of such acts is prompted thereto by an innate voice of warning, which we call conscience.—This conscience seems to be a kind of recollection which the immaterial principle has retained from former lives, and which makes man surmise that some acts will have disagreeable consequences, though they may satisfy the senses for a while.—Now these acts, which man's reason and conscience disapprove of, we call sin.

That sin is caused by the property of matter, we discover by an observation of nature; for, if we go back we find in all creation this blind working of matter which causes sin in man. We find it in all the animal kingdom, and even in the vegetable and mineral-kingdoms.

For instance, let us pour a strong acid on some kind of salt, it immediately will repulse the weaker acid therefrom, and form itself into a new salt with the alkali it subtracted from the other. The strong acid committed here a violent robbery.

In the plants we see the same working of matter; the roots of the plant draw their nourishment from the ground regardless whether it leaves any for its fellow-plants, or destroys them by withdrawing all their food.

In the animal kingdom we see the lion tearing the lamb to pieces, without troubling himself in the least about the pain and terror he causes that creature. The fox kills the chicken in the same way; he also cares very little whether the chicken be somebody's property or not. The same is true of the mouse, it steals and spoils our viands, without caring what harm it does. That these creatures act in that way, is because they blindly obey the instigation of matter, having no sense sufficient to understand the harm they do.—Man, though possessing understanding, acts, nevertheless, in many respects in the same manner.

That dishonesty and avarice, as also incontinence and debauchery are the effects of the property of matter, is to be seen from the above, yet besides these sins, there are others which would not appear to be connected with the property of matter, as hatred, jealousy, deceit, etc. They, however, are all of material origin, having merely lost some of their original appearance by the co-operation of the brain.

To show that such evil feelings are aroused by matter, we ask, would not the acid, of which we spoke just now, hate the other acid that took away the alkali wherewith it was combined, in case it possessed the power of discernment? We think it would. It would also feel jealous at seeing the other comfortably seated while it was rejected. If matter has not these feelings, it is only because it has no power of thought, but it is having the brain at its disposal, as is the case in the animal-creature, then we see these feelings arise.—We discover hatred and jealousy in all animals.

Deceit must also be a sin of material origin, but having lost its material appearance by the co-operation of the brain, for deceit, or craft, we find in the brute, though the brute is a very material being. We even most notice deceit in those animals where the material propensities are more visible, as in the carnivorous species. They all try to catch their prey in a crafty manner, when they see that their strength is of no avail. The blind matter, it is true, respect nothing but the right of the strongest, but as soon as matter is gifted with a power of discernment, it will make use of deceit instead of strength if it sees a better chance of reaching its purposes thereby. We discover craft, or deceit, in the tiger, in the fox, in the rat, and in a great many other animals;—we also find deceit in man. Yet, as experience has shown that deceit is the most developed in uncivilized races, and in the lower characters of civilized society, and is, moreover always, or nearly always, accompanied by cupidity preying on the good faith of others, we must conclude that deceit is the lowest order of a regular working of the brain, instigated by the property of matter.—Thus, we may view the sins as originating in matter, though some may have degenerated from the original by co-operation of the brain.

From what precedes, the reader will mark that sin in man, is not, as is generally believed, caused by beguiling whisperings of an invisible fiend, but is merely

caused by the property of matter, of which the human body is made.—Considering furthermore, the careful manner in which the Supreme wisdom conducts the immaterial part of the creatures, gradually, towards development, we arrive at the conclusion that the Eternal himself could not bring forth a creature that was perfect at once, but has been obliged to follow this way of graduation, since the property of matter was not to be done away with, it being a property which Necessity brought into matter; and the Eternal himself is dependent on the laws of necessity.

But though the property of matter has the bad effect of occasioning sin in the creature, it is on the other hand, the cause of the power of formation we discover in nature, without which space would have remained unaltered forever. Sin, therefore, is an unavoidable evil, inseparable from the formation of things; yet this evil the once formed creature must learn how to mitigate; and it has to mitigate it before it will be able to enjoy the full happiness of existence, which it is intended to enjoy; for it is sin, as often has been demonstrated by others, which is the great cause of unhappiness in the world

CHAPTER IX.

THE DESTINY OF MAN.

As we endeavored to demonstrate in the preceding chapter, man's immaterial part is destined to proceed on the great road towards perfection which lies before him. When, however, man does not live according to the dictates of his conscience, but chooses to live according to the instigations of the material body, he cannot be fit to proceed on that road; for then he makes himself like to a creature of lower order, and his immaterial part (soul) departing from the body will have to follow the same course which the soul of such a creature, to which man made himself equal, has to follow.—The person, on the other hand, who has learnt to subdue the propensities of matter, and has improved the capacities of his reason, the soul of such a one will be fit to advance on the road of progression, and therefore it will, after death, be re-united to a body of superior qualities, in harmony with the state of progression which that immaterial principle has reached.

The creature he then will form, will, in all appearance, be living on some other planet; that creature will be happier than man is now, for it has more strength to subdue the property of matter, which is the cause of so much unhappiness. Nevertheless, as no being, leaving this world, has ever been able to subdue the sinful inclinations altogether, it will even in a happier world have to wrestle against them, and even may have to wrestle against allurements of which it knows nothing now. A perfect happiness, therefore, man cannot yet expect

after this life ; as that life will be a mixture of happiness and grief, where the happiness will be greater in proportion as such being has got strength to overcome the material allurements.

If man's life on earth is a mixture of happiness and grief, it may for the same reason be in consequence of acts committed in previous lives. For, it seems that Providence has arranged matters in such a way that all acts contrary to its desire (that is, contrary to progression) are followed by disagreeable consequences, either in the present time, or afterwards ; while the contrary takes place with acts in harmony with progression. It would seem unjust that the creature be punished for acts it does not longer remember, but the reader has to reflect that the punishment is not distributed for the sake of punishment, but merely to oblige the creature to follow the road Providence destined it to go ; yea, perhaps punishment is merely a necessary consequence of acts contrary to progression. And though now the creature may have forgotten the cause why he is punished, his conscience will remember it, and will warn him whenever he is about committing the same fault.

Thus we may suppose that every creature is made to proceed towards progression, and with that towards happiness. The one may advance quicker than the other, but all will be obliged, sooner or later, to proceed ; and the more obstinate they are in following the evil, the more time they will require for it, and the more afflictions they will have to endure.

That we take it for granted that happiness, or bliss, will be the ultimate destiny of the creature, is, in the first place, because the creature making part (however little that may be) of the Eternal being, the latter could not be happy himself if he was not conducting his own body towards happiness.—We are further aware of a feeling of hope within us, which make us expect a happier life hereafter, when we deserve it ; now that feeling of hope was implanted in us by the Eternal, to whom everything is known ; and as we cannot suppose that he would have implanted that feeling to deceive us, we must suppose that it speaks the truth. On these grounds and many more, too long to discuss here, we are to believe that ultimate happiness shall in the end be the share of every creature.

Man has his earthly happiness partly in his own hands ; if he acts right, and is industrious and moderate in his ambition, he will be happier than if he acts otherwise. It is true that man, notwithstanding that he acts right, cannot be fully happy, because other people not acting in that way, a part of the curse which they throw on society, reflect upon every member of that body. For all men could be happy if every member of society would but act properly ; still, this not being the case, we therefore have to go through life as best we can ; it seems also that the creature was made to go through hard experience, so as to become better fit for future lives.

Yet, for the afflictions which circumstances and society bring upon the individual, Providence gave us a balm to alleviate their sharpest pain, it gave us in the first place the feeling of hope, which makes us believe in better days, and

bear all grievances with greater patience ; secondly, friendship, and a feeling of love, which are both great comforters, for where is the person that does not feel his cares mitigated when he has friends to console and assist him by advice and deeds ?

When however, all hope has vanished, and when friendship and love can be of no more avail, when incurable diseases or ill-fated circumstances prey upon man, then Providence sent us another comforter, and his name is Death.—The name of “ death ” sounds ugly, we know, for those who are young and happy, but for him whose life has become too heavy a burden, it sounds otherwise. He instinctively knows that death is nothing but the removal of the soul to a happier and brighter world, at least for him who acted right, and he smiles upon death as the kindest deliverer that Providence could have sent him.

How many steps the immaterial element of the creature will have to make before it will have reached the highest perfection, is not possible for us to define. One thing only is certain, it never can become equal to the Supreme being, for while the latter has a primary existence, the other has only a secondary one. The soul of the creature will accordingly have to go a very long way in the infinity of progression, without ever being able to reach as high as divine perfection ;—yet, we hazard to surmise, it might be that the immaterial principle should come to a stand-still at last.—We suggested in one of the former chapters the possibility of the immaterial principles (a positive and a negative) of the creatures getting united after death, forming thus together the soul of a new being. In this manner the number of creatures would diminish by half, with every higher step of the ladder of progression. If this should be so all over the universe, then after the immaterial principles would have passed through millions of generations (which might take a time which would appear to us to be like eternity) the number of higher beings they would constitute would become at last very small, and even at the end only one higher creature would come forth, whose soul would consist in all these former principles combined. (Creatures of lower order would still be existing in indefinite numbers.)

Now it may be, that when the immaterial element of the creature has reached thus far, that then (after that highest perfected being, the nearest to the All-supreme, should have ended its career), it will be re-united again to the Eternal soul, the Soul of the Universe, wherefrom it originally proceeded, so as to serve once more for the reproduction of new creatures.—This it might do by providing immaterial substance to the globes ; who by emitting it to their surface, cause the birth of the very plainest products of the live-creation ; which, by following the road of progression again, become higher beings in their turn.

This is only a suggestion ; but since we see in nature a contest between matter and immaterial, and in consequence thereof a power of attraction and one of repulsion, a power of condensation and a power of dividing, it might thus be that each of the two contending powers would obtain ascendancy in turn in the great creation ; they both have the same origin, are thus alike in strength, and there would be no reason why only the one should continually prevail.

If this should be as we suggest, then it would follow that the universe remains eternally the same ; only its minor parts are changing, but these changes are temporary, and things return to their former state. As these changes are going on continually, through all eternity, the great Whole would bear forever the same appearance, though the creatures and the heavenly globes were changing. (We are aware that this suggestion will greatly displease those who are accustomed to believe in the eternity of the soul, yet they may observe that even according to this idea, the career which the soul will have to follow will be of such a length, that the time it will take to reach the end will be as much as an eternity for our thoughts.)

CHAPTER X.

THE DIVINE PRECEPTS

Providence gifted man with reason.—Man obviously received this gift in order to make use of it; even the fact of his having more power of reason than the brute, shows that he was destined to be, for the present, a more important being, which he only can be by making use of his intellect.—We have to conclude therefrom that it is the desire of the Eternal that man should use his reason.

Man's reason teaches him the fundamental principles of truth, namely, he knows by means of it, instinctively, many truths, which he never learnt; and he calls them self-evident truths.

By taking those self-evident truths as bases, and building thereon other facts, according to the rules which his natural sense of truth dictates, man comes to the possession of greater knowledge, which he calls science.—Our human science thus descending from the first principles of truth, which the Eternal grafted in man, might be said to be of Divine origin.

(So-called sciences, which are not based upon those fundamental principles, but on lies, are mock-sciences.—They, of course, are not of Divine origin, but originate from the evil passions in man, and can also only be vindicated by means of sophistry. Among the mock-sciences, the false theology takes the principal place.)

Among the sciences not yet sufficiently cultivated by man (because it has been kept down, artificially, by fanatics and imposters) is the science of true-theology—a science which should have taken the first place among all, because it would have taught man the true religion, and made known to him the divine commandments, according to which man has to direct his actions.

Seeing now that the study of this science has been neglected, we shall not pretend to be fully acquainted with the instructions it lays down; yet, as the

latter must also be based upon the truths which are engrafted in man's brain, we therefore think, that, by some reflection and by consulting human experience, we may be able to find, without any further study, the chief moral maxims which it will dictate.

To wit : human reason and human experience reveal to man acts that are injurious to the well being of the individual, and to the well-being of society.— They further reveal to men that they are placed on earth to live, and to improve in knowledge (that is, in civilization), and that this is evidently the design which Providence has in view with mankind.

Furthermore, man is gifted with a natural desire to be happy ; and he also has an innate voice of warning (the conscience), which latter causes him to surmise that when he opposes, by his actions, the design of Providence, he will be less happy for it.

Those actions opposed to the design of Providence, we call sins ; they are of two sorts, sins against ourselves, whereby we obstruct our physical or mental well-being, and sins against others, whereby we obstruct the physical or mental well-being of our fellow-creatures.

Experience has proved that our surmise, of being less happy when opposing the design of the Eternal, is not only a surmise but a fact. For, is it not generally known that a person when giving himself over to lewdness, or intemperance, or to excesses of whatever kind, breaks down his bodily and mental state of health ? A shortened life, a broken constitution, and often imbecility, and even madness, are the punishments that await him.—A person leading such a life, has thwarted the design wherewith the Eternal placed him on earth, he has therefore sinned not only against himself, but also against that Supreme being.

The other sin of man against his fellow-creatures, does not always bring back punishment, in such a visible manner, on the head of him who committed the sin ; yet the sin is in no way smaller for that reason, for it is plain that other people have the same right to their happiness as we have to ours. The evil consequences of this sin come however partly back upon him who sinned, already during this life, for the whole society suffer for it, and he, being a member thereof, gets his share of the suffering.

Do we not see how in society one individual distrusts the other ; how every one feels himself as among foes, though all men were made to be brethren. Yea, the ties of relationship are broken up, and disharmony and suffering are observed all around. Why is this ? it is on account of those people that sin against their fellow-beings ; on account of those that lie, and steal, and rob, and slander, and are prying upon the lives and happiness of their brethren, supposing to fare themselves well thereby. For them, society has to keep jails, penitentiaries, police courts, etc., and has to suffer general distrust, while the world might be happy otherwise. They, who cause that general suffering, that distrust, and disharmony, participate themselves of the evil effects thereof (and that largely), for though they may dissemble and escape the law, they are instinctively shunned by their fellow-beings, and they feel themselves the enemies of all.

Man who co-operates, by his acts, to this general suffering, does, therefore, sin against his fellow-men, (against society,) and against himself, and also against the Eternal, who designed mankind to live in society, and to love and assist one another.—That this is the desire of the Eternal is to be perceived from the fact, that man is not fit to live separately, as he could not provide alone for all his wants; also, human civilization was only possible by individuals exchanging their thoughts and working conjointly, and it is only in that way that civilization can proceed still further.

Whereas now the design of the Eternal must be accomplished, since every thing in creation depends one upon the other, and the non-accomplishment of one part of the design would derange the whole, we, for this reason, presume that the Eternal has arranged affairs in such a way that the creature will be obliged to follow up his desire, and to experience, either immediately or later, the disagreeable consequences of every act opposed to the divine design.—Such punishments the Eternal does not distribute, because of a feeling of revenge, but because the creature must be made to proceed on the road towards perfection.

That the consequences will be more or less disagreeable, in proportion to the greater or less distance the creature has strayed from the right path, is to be supposed, because everything goes according to fixed laws, and they must work with equity; for if there was no apprehension of equity in Providence, there could be no order reigning in nature.

Thus we see, that the rational being has to obey the commandments which the Eternal proclaim in nature, and in the reason of the creature. Man has to obey these precepts, not so much to please the Deity as for his own personal benefit, that he may be spared, the disagreeable consequences which disobedience infallibly brings down upon itself.

All the Divine commandments are then, chiefly, contained in these words: "Do nothing detrimental to the well-being of others, nor to Your own, but seek to improve Your own and other people's (bodily and mental) well-being as much as Your capacity will allow."

"Furthermore, man shall not ill-treat, nor take the life of other animal-creatures, without sufficient cause, as they are his minor brethren, and not able to defend themselves against him."

If we say that man must seek to improve his bodily and *mental* well-being and that of other people, it is because without mental improvement no progress on the road of perfection is possible. For Man, should remember that he makes a living creature through the union of material and immaterial elements; one of which reigns in the body, the other in the mind. Now both these two must have the food they want, and be kept thereby in equilibrium. For, if man gives to either of them more than it wants, it will improve, or preponderate to the detriment of the other, and the harmony of the union is destroyed, and if he gives it less than it wants, the other element will improve and preponderate to its detriment, and again the harmony is destroyed. Therefore no well-being in the

real sense of the word is possible where the mind is not as well cared for as the body.

Since now, we have seen that it is the design of the Eternal to make the creature fit to proceed in perfection, it follows, that the true adoration of the Godhead consists not in fasting, nor in singing of hymns, nor in frequenting many churches, or other exhibitions of piety, (for none of these adorations, the Eternal desires, as he is too great to be vain,) but consists in actions—that is by acting in accordance with the design he has in view with his creatures. This being the only adoration which may be believed to please.

For the same reason, we have to observe that prayers, though they may relieve the burdened mind, will not avail any one who thinks to make good by them what he did wrong by action. This he can only do by deeds, but not by idle words, as true adoration of the Godhead consists in actual deeds, not in mere words and show.

END.