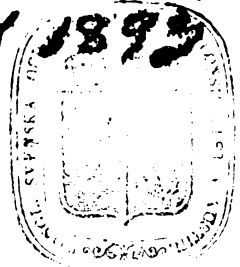


Swanee Palm
Austria Society
Sept 1893

LECTURES



ON THE

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,

DELIVERED AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA,

DURING THE SESSION OF 1860-1.

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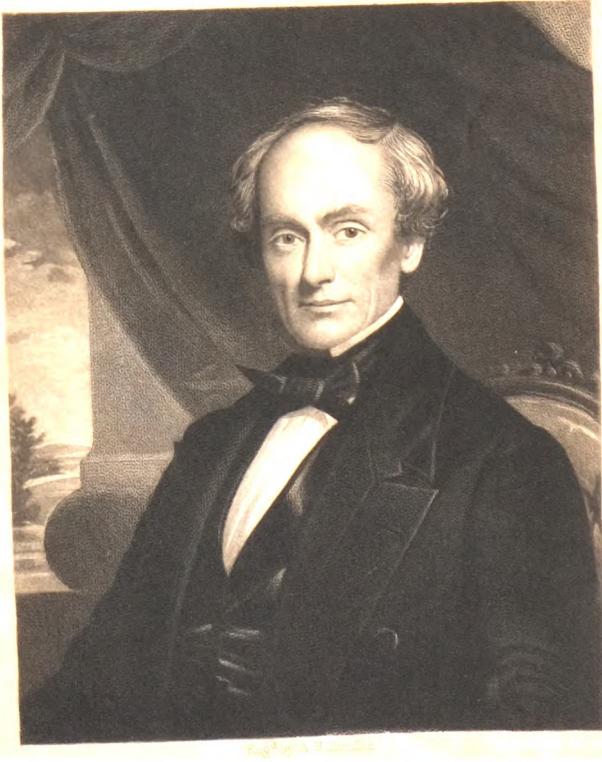
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4.



Alex^r. T. McGill

Prophecy,

BY

REV. ALEXANDER T. M'GILL, D.D.

PROFESSOR IN THE WESTERN THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY, ALLEGHANY, PA.

I.

It will not be denied, that sacred prophecy was extant, with its text completely finished, four hundred years ago; when the Bible was first printed, with movable metallic types, by Guttenberg of Mentz. The last four hundred years, however, have been the most impenetrable of all eras, to the exercise of human foresight; teeming with more numerous, involved, and utter contingencies, than pervade the whole duration of ages before. The passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope; the discovery of a western hemisphere; the great reformation in Europe; the revolutions in England, America, and France; not to speak of magical changes, by means of science, invention, and art;—all these have made the history of man a maze of transformation, compared with which the former times were vista, obstructed by this labyrinth alone.

Surely, it can be no human foresight, which could delineate, in the lapse of such a future, lands devoted to the exception of a curse; and say, that this and that particular country, or people, would be palsied by the side of universal progress—not affected materially, nor affected at all, by the extreme vicissitudes and overwhelming emergencies which have come on the whole world besides. Least of all would human sagacity have ventured to affirm, that Egypt, Palestine, and Syria would be as they now are; for until that very time, these countries had been a theatre of perpetual changes, and the most wonderful events that burden the pages of history. Simultaneous with that primitive impression of the Bible, was the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Ottoman Turk: and who, with less than superhuman prescience, could have told, that here the waves of eastern revolution would be stayed, that Turkish turbulence itself would not break the stillness of desolation henceforth, that the day of civil redemption for all civilized nations, the day of liberty and commerce, art and science, would not first dawn, nor dawn at all, on

the regions of rapid and extreme revolution, through a.l previous time.

Defer then, if you please, the whole question of date, integrity, and preservation of these oracles; and the faithful corroboration, with which all history details the facts of their fulfilment, until you subject their minute vaticinations to the inquest of living observers, and the verdict of journalizing infidelity itself. We have not only the general condition of ruin, yet to be seen, just as the Scriptures foretold it, over lands which have as delicious a climate, and as fertile a bosom, by nature, as any others on the face of the earth—itself conclusive proof that these prophets “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” and the general exemption from change, during a period of unparalleled changes, everywhere else, in lands, which, down till the accession of Mohammed the 2d, had been a battle-field of every power and every principle that struggled for mastery in human affairs—which monotony of ruin is also, of itself, a miracle in forecast; but we have minute accomplishments of the ancient letter, within these last four hundred years—a touch of Providence, here and there, upon the general picture, which might convince a skepticism, low enough to doubt all evidence anterior to the age of printing.

“The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth,” said Isaiah, in foretelling the judgments of God upon his country: and what traveller does not verify, to its letter, the truth of this prediction, since the Turk established his empire over Palestine? “In the interior of the country,” says Volney, “there are neither great roads, nor canals, nor even bridges, over the greatest part of the rivers and torrents, however necessary they may be, in winter. Nobody travels alone, for the insecurity of the roads. The roads among the mountains are extremely bad, and the inhabitants are so far from levelling them, that they endeavor to make them more rugged, in order, as they say, to cure the Turks of their desire to introduce their cavalry.”

“Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot,” said the prophet Jeremiah, in bewailing the same future desolation. And Volney has detailed the accomplishment, with a minuteness of description which no other testimony has surpassed. After enumerating a long list of pastoral marauders, who infest the whole region of Syria, in which he includes Judea—Curds, and Turkomen, and Bedouin Arabs—he informs us, that the most sedentary inhabitants are compelled to

become wandering bandits, in self-defence, and that, "under a government like that of the Turks, it is safer to lead a wandering life, than to choose a settled habitation."

"I will give it into the hands of strangers, for a prey," said Ezekiel, "and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil. The robber shall enter into it and defile it." "When the Ottomans took Syria from the Mamelukes," says the infidel tourist, "they considered it as the spoil of a vanquished enemy. The government are far from disapproving of a system of robbery and plunder which it finds so profitable."

Even the prophecies of Moses, on the same subject, never had their accomplishment written out, with more striking exactness, than by the pen of this great academician. "The stranger," says Moses, "that cometh from a far land shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid on it—Wherefore hath the Lord done this unto this land—what meaneth the heat of this great anger?" "Good God!" exclaims Volney, who did come from a far land, a stranger in every sense to the scene he surveyed—"whence proceed such melancholy revolutions—for what cause is the fortune of these countries so strikingly changed—why are so many cities destroyed—why is not that ancient population reproduced and perpetuated?"

These are specimens, taken at random, from only four ancient prophets, relating to a single topic, restricted to the latest era of fulfilment, and confirmed by the unwilling testimony of a skeptical philosopher. Evidence, precisely similar, might be multiplied to any extent of modern travel—in regard to Samaria, Judea, Philistia, Tyre, Ammon, Edom, Egypt—every country whose doom is recorded in prophecies of Scripture. Everywhere, minute and incidental, but not less forcible demonstrations of their truth, have been enacted, since the day when chirography resigned to the press that toil of transcription, which infidelity is fain to cover with suspicion of unfaithfulness.

Now, if enlightened observers, like Volney, are so much astonished at the singular and constant desolation of those Eastern countries, with the whole operation of second causes fully before them, surely, no intelligence of man could have ventured four, (much less thirty) centuries ago, to draw such a picture: not even with the clear anticipation of despotic Islamism, firmly established, during this period: for, in the light of history, all those regions

wanted to retrieve their melancholy wastes was rest—rest, though burdened with tyranny rapacious as that of Roman procurators, under whom, according to Josephus, Galilee alone contained more than two hundred towns and cities crowded with industrious people.

Geographical accuracy itself, in these predictions, might be called a miracle of truth. Where is the author, not to say the score of authors, from Strabo, to Malte Brun, whose description of places and manners referred to in the prophets, though far less particular, is not contradicted, on almost every page, by travellers and writers more recent? But all the researches, of believers and unbelievers alike, conducted with the utmost help of science, literature, and leisure, have not hitherto discovered one mistake among the innumerable assertions and allusions, of the many authors, in this holy volume. And yet, instinct with its own aggressive life and truth, it will not rest in this freedom from valid contradiction. Where, from the poverty of ancient annals, it had been left a lone witness to facts on which its prophecy was based, in the luxury, magnificence, and crime, of cities and countries, over which it uttered the doom we witness at the present day; and after it has waited long for the accomplishment of one particular, that men would not even know where that ruined grandeur reposed, it comes, with the spirit of this eager age, to dig its *terminus a quo*, from the bowels of the earth, or scale it on the desert rock, and guide the hermeneutics of science herself, by the hints of obsolete prophecy.

Another proof, that these predictions are a miracle, even if their date could not be traced beyond the epoch of a printed Bible, is the condition of the Jewish people. At the middle of the 15th century, what sagacious diviner among men, judging from the tendency of visible events, would not have said, that the Jews would soon become entirely merged in other nations, and cease to be known as a distinct and singular people? The golden age of their modern learning had just pre-occupied the admiration of Europe; and it was not the learning which had signalized the palmy days of ancient Israel—historical writing, chronicles, and genealogies, that were naturally conducive to their perpetuity as a separate family. They had now become the best of medieval philosophers—the physicians, astronomers, and political economists, of dawning science. Their poetry itself had been divorced from national traditions, and from the imagery of altar and sacri-

fice, tabernacle and temple, as well as the parallelism of its Hebrew metre; and become localized and fresh, as the lays of the Troubadour. The agricultural industry which had been their ancient pride, and which more than any other pursuit of life, would isolate a people, had been relinquished; not for mysteries of art, reserved to themselves and their children; but for the business of exchange, open and wide as the commerce of the world. Add to this, the many particular facts, which had just transpired then, especially on the greatest theatre of observation, at that time, in the civilized world—Catholic Spain—where amalgamation itself threatened their extinction as a separate people, and inquisitors complained, that almost every noble family in the realm had become tainted, by intermarriage with the *mala sangre* of the house of Judah, and where thirty-five thousand converts from Judaism had been made, by the eloquence and legerdemain of one St. Vincent Ferrier alone. And yet, the lapse of four hundred years, intensely working all the while, with influences, and agencies, and accidents, which have never failed in any other case, with less than half their force, to annihilate a nation, has left them still a distinct and singular people. Take but the land of their fathers, from any primitive tribe on this continent, in North, or South, or Central America, and they fade from the earth. No matter what beautiful lands of prairie and forest you give in exchange, and what pains you take, to perpetuate their own barbarous tongue, and what beneficence you exert, to heal their diseases, teach their ignorance, and encourage the arts of husbandry and peace and independent self-government—come to their place, and they perish from the nations. Similar, if not so frail, is the tendency of all distinctive national existence to vanish away at the contact of heterogeneous civilization, or change of language, law, intercourse, or custom. But here is the unparalleled exception. Bred, in every diversity of language and custom under heaven—steeped in every element of social, civil, and religious change—scattered and peeled, within this period, by more horrid persecutions to the constancy of individual fortitude, than ever befel their fathers, at the hands of Adrian and Heraclius—and then, again, released, indulged, caressed; made richer in the old world, than Solomon himself “in all his glory,” and freer in the new world, than judges of their ancient commonwealth—it is all the same. “A full end,” according to one of these prophecies, approaches to Spain, and Portugal, and every modern na-

tion, distinguished for oppressing them, just as it has been completed on Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Rome, and every ancient "rod" of vengeance in the hand of almighty truth—but they survive!

Why, the miracle of this anomaly itself, might well bespeak the credibility of oracles, sent down through such a living mystery among us; but when we know, it was foretold, ages before the contingencies that shape it could have been imagined, how irresistible the inference, that God alone foretold it, and must have given the Bible; where alone these marvels can be explained; where, even the portions they reject, inform us, that the mystery of this preservation is the completion of prophecies, yet to be effected by their instrumentality. What is there peculiar, in the past and present condition of the Jews, that was not prophesied, and threatened more than promised, in the prophecies, and therefore most unwillingly fulfilled? Their dispersion among all nations, and yet everlasting immiscibility; their blindness and suffering, feebleness and fearfulness; their ceaseless agitation, compulsion to idolatry, and temptation to hypocrisy; their obdurate unbelief, deep malignity, avarice of wealth, and exposure in every age to robbery, mockery, and remorseless oppression—all were foretold by their own early prophets, and among these, even the meekly patriotic leader of their exodus from bondage, over the infancy of their national existence, while as yet they were a most fickle and fluctuating people, so changeable, as to surprise him with a complete revolution of sentiment, during his absence of forty days on the mount, although the thunders of Sinai had been commissioned, meanwhile, to keep them in constancy.

II. But it is time to advance from our gratuitous position, and to indicate the boundless field of confirmation, which the true date of these predictions will throw open. We received the Old Testament prophecies from the Jews; and certainly, no corruption of the text can have occurred, within the last 1800 years of deposit in the hands of Christians, for Jews and Christians have checked each other, all the while, with a vigilance which has never slept: and galled, as the former have always been, by the evidence of fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth, they would have exposed, with loud and long reprehension, the slightest alteration of the text that could have crept into Christendom.

Before the advent of Christ, the integrity of every book, and the truth of every date, were guaranteed beyond a doubt by the

superstition, which numbered the words and the letters, and denounced death on the man who would alter a point or iota; by the jealous animosity of parties in opposite schools, or political factions, which were founded on diverse interpretations, and existed from the days of the prophets themselves; by the public reading in the synagogue, which engraved the words on the memory of the people; by the existence of translations, and especially the Greek, at Alexandria, nearly 300 years before the Christian era, and in a metropolis of learning, where religious eclecticism was the fashion of philosophy, and would be sure, in the hands of both Jew and Greek, to fix a special attention upon this wonderful volume: these considerations, and others, such as the internal evidence, from language, allusion, and order, prove most clearly that no *post eventum* interpolation can have mingled with these prophecies, and no surreptitious date can have cheated the church under any dispensation.

True, the temerity of unbelief has often assailed this clear demonstration. Porphyry said the book of Daniel must have been written after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, because the events of his reign are so minutely described—thus, in fact, yielding the argument; and leaving us no more to refute than a cavil of criticism, which hardly stands to be told—a play upon words, which he discovered in some apocryphal appendage, that was published with the Greek translation of Daniel; from which he conjectured that the book had been written in Greek, originally, and translated into Hebrew: and yet, beyond all question, the book was extant, in Greek, more than a hundred years before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, which, itself, suffices for the argument. When we know that this is all an accomplished adversary, sixteen hundred years ago, with all his pains and opportunities, could do, in discrediting the date of these predictions, we may well suppose, that any hardihood like his, in modern times, would slaver worse in the infatuation.

And so it happens with renowned *neology*; the very fame of which has propped the infidelity, that never read a page of German exegesis. This new era of interpretation is perfectly explained, so far as our subject is concerned, when we say, that it has brought all the learning and ingenuity of man, to argue in a circle, that there can be no proper prophecy at all—no revelation of the contingent future. This negation of our faith is always presumed in order to be proved; and now, that they have had

a century of time for the work of their own great doctrinal prejudice, in their own way of logical injustice, what are the results? We ask not for a system, coherent and complete, which they have built on the ruins of our supernatural faith; for system they never proposed; and, in destruction to the objective bulwarks of religion, they have destroyed one another in quick and constant succession. But what principles of interpretation may we glean from the vast researches, and progressive development, with which the rationalistic criticism would emancipate man from belief in the marvellous? Just enough to subvert all historical evidence, and cover with doubt the whole authenticated past.

Whatever has come down to the eighteenth century, undisputed and unchallenged, through ten thousand generations, of the learned and the unlearned, must, of course, be considered spurious until the contrary be proved. By this canon the prophecy of Isaiah has been set aside. Whatever, on the other hand, has met a challenge, at any time, in the course of criticism or of controversy, however long posterior to its proper date, must be also rejected. By this canon, Daniel and the Apocalypse are both set aside. Wherever another reading can be conjectured, materially different from that which has been received, it is to be the true reading until the other can be proved: and wherever the fertility and taste of any author, avoid the use of a remarkable expression, more than once, that expression must be considered an interpolation by some later hand. By these canons, all prophecy is rifled of its pure vaticination, and left a turgid rhapsody, without even the gems of literature to commend it.—No other limit shall be imposed on the license of critical acumen than a man's own critical feeling: and wherever, by the dictates of this critical feeling, there may be internal proof of genuineness and integrity in any book, this proof can establish no more than a good imitation by a subsequent writer. By these canons, all revelation becomes a subjective chameleon, forever uncertain to the most believing individual.

Such are some of the axioms which must be the basis of all exposition, and the bottom of all deep research, if you follow these guides in biblical study; or venture any investigation whatever, with that same refinement of criticism which three generations of progressive neology have attained, by seeking rest in letters for the foot of enlightened infidelity. And is it not enough to establish the truth of every date, and the integrity of

every text, that we point you to this amazing fatuity of gifted scholars and profound philologists, who have devoted a lifetime to the work of their repudiation? Deadly recoil forever attends the impotent endeavor.

But now, that the true antiquity and antecedence of these prophecies will bring all history before us, in the range of their accomplishment, compared with which, the attestations we have indicated, within the last four hundred years, are but a glance at the sepulchre as it remains until this day—where shall we begin or end the illustration of our theme: or how compute the greater cogency of this great argument, when the retrocession of the date, not only multiplies the number, but enhances the contingency of prophesied events, by so many more intervening threads of complicated influence and incident? Thebes, and Petra, and Rabbah, and Gaza, and Tyre, and Samaria, and Jerusalem, and Nineveh, and Babylon—cities in particular, whose greater minuteness of destiny would be far less adventured by human conjecture than countries or kingdoms—all had their downfall described, and their present condition of ruin foretold, in remote antiquity, and at the very time when each in its proud glory was most rampant and secure. Go, we beg you, to the most rigid and careful examination, with the Bible in one hand, and history in the other. So numerous are the prophecies before us, that no less than two hundred distinct predictions may be counted in relation to the family of Abraham alone; most of which have been already fulfilled to the very letter, none of which have ever been falsified, and such as remain to be accomplished, guaranty the certainty of that event, not only by words which have never failed, but by facts, submitted to the observation of every age, in the standing miracle of Arabic as well as Jewish nationality. Despairing of justice to any part of this great field, and oppressed with the magnitude of its claims to a full investigation, we shall merely stand for a little at the central theme of inspired predictions, the truth of every promise, the substance of every shadow, the mystery of God manifest in the flesh.

Four thousand years, at least, before the birth of Jesus Christ, it was announced that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent; a most frivolous declaration, in the most dignified and sublime of all compositions, if it mean anything else than the promise of a great avenger on the agent of our ruin, to spring from the mother of mankind. More than two

thousand years afterwards the spirit of prophecy began to develop and define that primeval promise; foretelling its fulfilment in the seed of Abraham, then of Isaac, then of Jacob, then of Judah, and at length of David. And, along with these successive limitations of his lineage in the flesh, were successive revelations of his character, and the constitution of his person, by words and by types, until the waxing adumbration became the burden of song. All the powers of imagination, and depths of emotion, and fountains of tender affection, and intimacies of personal experience, in the trials of life, and succors of grace, and conduct of Providence—the whole inner life of the Hebrews—became a sentiment of mysterious anticipation, which passed over even to the heathen around them, and spread with every dispersion of the Jews, until it imbued the literature of pagans, and became a world-wide expectation. The prophets of Israel availed themselves of this great Messianic idea in the popular mind to arouse, rebuke, console, or encourage the nation, according to circumstances: so that abrupt transitions to it and from it, as well as latent intimations of it, were perfectly natural, in view of this general sentiment among the people, as well as extatic impulse of the seer.

A splendid succession of prophets followed the Psalms of David for the space of five hundred years; each one revealing a new feature, while rehearsing in the color of his own genius and times what others had uttered; until the portraiture was finished, four hundred years before the actual advent. And what a sum of special criteria does it embody, by which to test his absolute identity and their true inspiration of God! It foretells that he will come in lowly condition; born of a virgin, at Bethlehem; of the family of David, when it shall have sunk to the lowest depression;—that a forerunner, in the spirit of Elijah, will herald his entrance on a public ministry; and a copious effusion of the Holy Ghost will be his great inauguration; and Galilee of the gentiles the principal place of his beneficent working and teaching;—that his formal entrance into Jerusalem will be upon an ass, amidst the loud acclamations of a multitude, while the second temple is yet standing to receive him, the recesses of which will ring with hosannas of little children in his praise;—that his authority will be rejected, his salvation refused, his person despised; and surrounded by malignant persecutors, betrayed into their hands by his own familiar friend, and that for thirty pieces of silver, he will be devoted, with his own meek submis-

sion, to extreme insult, mockery, and abuse, until his hands and feet are pierced, and his life cut off by their violence; cut off in the midst of malefactors, and for the transgression of others; without a spot of guilt on his own soul, or one taint of iniquity on the whole of his life;—that his murderers will distribute his clothing by lot; and he will be laid in the grave of a rich man at his burial; but not long enough to see corruption in his body, for he will rise from the dead with power, ascend to heaven with a shout of angels; and usher down the glories of a new administration, with a great effusion of the Spirit, upon all classes and conditions of men; and gladtidings will be everywhere proclaimed, the burden of Levitical rites will be abolished, and guilty Jerusalem destroyed;—and all these wonderful and particular things are fixed, in time, precisely, by a computation of weeks and half weeks, five hundred years before they occurred!

What possible ingenuity of unbelief can evade this overwhelming demonstration, at the centre of our theme—"more sure," according to Peter, than an audible voice from the throne of heaven? No one can deny that these things, and many others predicted, were exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; and no one will say, without absurdity, that if all the parties concerned in working out the accomplishment had joined together in perfect concert, they could have made so many contingencies work together at the very time and place. But who does not know that they were completed, not only through strange conjunctures, sudden and signal, but in spite of confusion, hostility, ignorance, and counteraction, to the utmost extent of man's perverted will? From the close of the Old Testament prophecy to the coming of Christ, the interval was one of incessant agitation over all the world, and especially Palestine, where not only was the Jewish commonwealth "overturned, and overturned, and overturned," by every change of politics, and the crown of David flung as a bauble from hand to hand of the insolent victors; but schools of arrogant pretension, arose in the bosom of the nation, which depraved the Messianic apprehension of their pious fathers, and would have utterly prevented, without one external disturbance, the manifestation of a Saviour like ours, as the product of his age, or psychological effect of a national sentiment for ages maturing, or, in any sense whatever, a self-evolution, by the operation of causes—like the many false Christs, that so often appeared, in the sequel, to please and punish a morbid expecta-

tion. He came, after all, a surprising fact, a great historical emergency, which the manifold and minute predictions "that went before upon him," could do no more than attest and identify to a reluctant world.

The Great Prophet himself would, of course, mingle the future in his own teaching and preaching. And the companions of his life recorded, with care, not only predictions, which they lived to register beside the accomplishment, but predictions which they left unfulfilled, and sent forth, a liability for all men to seize; with all that was dear and true in their holy convictions, gaged on the occurrence of improbable contingencies. Such was the prophecy of our Lord respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, published by three of the evangelists, wide as the empire, many years before that catastrophe; and which the unbelieving Josephus, and the pagan Tacitus, and the Jewish Talmud itself, were left to confirm or confute according to events. Near forty years before the armies of Vespasian entered Judea, a casual conversation took place at the temple, where the disciples of our Lord, looking with fresh admiration at the huge foundation stones of that magnificent edifice, one of them said to him, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" "Jesus, answering, said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Was it probable, then, that the Roman empire would suffer any power on earth to spoil, with such deletion, the glory of that temple, the pride of the East, and cherished trophy of her own invincible arms?—and still more, that she herself would do it, so pleased of late with the loyal munificence of Herod, and so intent on pleasing a nation, renowned for obstinate courage, and numerous now, even to the banks of the Tiber?—and that in the Augustan age, of magnanimity and taste, of all others, the most averse from vandalic violence to monuments of art, or habitations of the local divinities she conquered? Yet we know it was done, with a vengeance, by the Roman himself, in a freak of exasperation, which even military orders could not prevent. The very name has been transmitted, of the man, Terentius Rufus, who drove a ploughshare through the ground on which the temple was built.

The very caprice of a Roman leader, who advanced, in the meantime, with a powerful army against Jerusalem, when it might have been taken without a battle, and then retreated, and retreated

without a reason, does not escape the eye of this Prophet. (Matt. xxiv. 6.) All the intervening casualties, of any account, are minutely predicted as signs of that dreadful consummation—false Christs, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and fearful sights from heaven, as well as war among the Jews, and persecution of the Christians—any one of which, foretold with similar precision, would have made a god of the most besotted pagan on the earth. And could we conceive that all these were but fortunate conjectures, or astute speculations, on the temper of a turbulent and seditious people, how is it that he would hazard a measure of time for the whole accomplishment?—and such a measure—itsself a miracle of foresight—it was to be within the life of a man, at that time in his presence. Compare Matt. xvi. 28 and xxiv. 34. John, his own disciple, did outlive the destruction of Jerusalem; and he is the only evangelist who did not record the prophecy, as he is the only one who could have tinged its terms, with *post eventum* observation. And still more than this, the most improbable thing in the world is expressly predicted as another antecedent: “The gospel must first be published among all nations”—a gospel which was not yet understood by the most intimate and wise of his own disciples, and which, by the direction of his own lips, had been confined to the limits of Judea—a gospel for the world promised by a Jew, and to be spread by the instrumentality of Jews, the very genius of whom was monopoly of religious advantages. Universal promulgation!—the thought of which had never entered the mind of man before—for any system of religion, morals, or philosophy: godlike, the lone idea, without a prophecy to promise it—much more to promise it so soon, while as yet there was not a “mustard seed” of visibility portending it. And yet it came to pass. The empire had been all traversed over, and the remotest regions of the East, in all probability, explored, before the torch of the soldier had touched the temple, or the energy of Titus had completed his trench.

A word was dropped respecting the continuance of the desolation which would follow. “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Never has that city ceased to be so trodden down, as you know, since “the abomination” made it desolate; never did the flaming sword in Eden more effectually bar the fallen progenitors of men from returning to the garden than these potential words have barred the Jew from reinstatement at Jerusalem. Three hundred years

after they had fallen from the Saviour's lips, Julian, with all the resources of the empire in his hands, and the energy of heroic vigor in his soul, and the hatred of apostate conscience in his heart, and the alacrity of a million homeless Jews at his side, dared to countervail this oracle of the Crucified One; and actually attempted to rebuild Jerusalem, and restore the Jews, for one monument, at least, of falsehood among the prophecies of Christianity,—when balls of fire issued from the earth to blast the workmen, and fearful portents interfered on every hand to hinder and deter the impious determination—a fact which all contemporaneous history, civil and ecclesiastical, pagan and Christian, will unite to establish. And call that strange phenomenon anything you please, or call its occurrence at all a sheer fabrication, which even Gibbon would not do, still we find the word of prophecy fulfilled, “quick and powerful,” to the minutest incident of its utterance, and vindicated marvellously, in the naked fact, that a mighty preparation for a mighty work was instantly abandoned, and the last imperial foe was hurried away, from audacious battle with his dead Galilean, to perish at the meridian of life, by the lance of a Persian soldier.

We would gladly pursue the outline of distinguished prophecies, already completed since the ascension of the Saviour, such as the dispersion of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, the rise of Mohammedan fury and delusion—and especially the great event of Antichristian apostasy, minutely foretold in 2 Thess. ii., and so precisely accomplished in the whole history of Papal Rome. It would be worth the space and labor of many an entire lecture, to see how the very objections to Christianity, from its early corruption and rapid degeneracy, prove the divinity of its origin; by the fact, that these things were all foretold, with an exactness of delineation, which nothing but a supernatural inspiration could have dictated. But we have passed our limits; and it remains to attempt a more direct and condensed exhibition of the argument in another lecture.

II.

To say what is required of prophecy, as an argument for the truth of revealed religion, hardly becomes the ignorance of man. The amount of conviction, the manner and means of it, are for Him only to devise, who comprehends our need, and the right education of our fallen and disordered understandings. There is an extravagance of incredulity, in many minds, which it were not worth the cost of other important interests, in the plan of God's moral government, to convince. There would be insult to reason itself, in that redundancy of demonstration, which the unbelief of aversion demands—an unbelief, which, if it were convinced to-day, would be as uncertain as ever to-morrow. And how far the moral evidence should be furnished, to persuade the sincere and earnest man, at every grade of intellectual power, and leave unreasonable incredulity to sink in its own abyss, of wretched iniquitude and doubt, we dare not undertake to define. But we venture, on this occasion, to affirm, that there is no conceivable requisition for evidence, on the part of a well-balanced mind, which is not satisfied, with the ample demonstrations of this argument from prophecy.

1. *It is required, that true prophecies claim to be such, when they are first delivered to men:* not a bundle of rhapsodies, which may be labelled poetry, history, or prophecy, according to the fancy of men, or chance of tradition, or advent of some verisimilitude. Let the title be clear. Let the claim be promulged in advance. Let all generations know, that these are predictions, the credit of which is entirely staked on developments in the future, which ten thousand uncertainties hide from the eye of human foreknowledge. Now, this is eminently true of scripture prophecies; as it would be superfluous to prove. Not only do they everywhere profess to anticipate the future, but they often apprise the reader, that they do it for the sake of argument, in order to prove the exclusive claims of this revelation; arming, in this way, all men with an edge of scrutiny against them. How striking the contrast, in this particular, with that significant evasion, with which other vaticinations doff the title, until time shall have decided on the luck of their adventure.

2. *It is required, that these prophecies be so expressed, as to be, in no proper sense, the cause of their own fulfilment.* They must have some meaning, of course, to the anterior student; exciting in him hope, and energy, and comfort, as well as anxious investigation: but they must be sufficiently obscure, in the form of expression, or in regard to the manner and means of their accomplishment, to preclude his own designing and direct exertions from achieving it. Otherwise, free agency might be constrained; the event might follow the prediction, as effect follows the cause; and prophecy would differ, only in the tense, from actual history. This perfection of enigma is peculiar to these inspired predictions: it could never be attained by man's contrivance. The Sibyl leaves, when tossed a little with the wind, were nonsense. The Delphic oracles, when articulate with future contingency, were always ambiguous, and so artfully constructed, that they might be fulfilled in any one of two or more contrary events. How many, like Cræsus, and like Pyrrhus, were deceived, at the most critical moments of life; and destroyed, by the fallacious hope, which those cunning impostures had contrived, to please the votary, in return for his gift, and yet retain the plausibility of truthfulness, under any sort of circumstances in the future. But no such ambiguity is here. Definite and sure, these oracles are always a warrant for the faith of him who trusts them, which will never deceive his honest hope: and yet, no skill of interpretation can write out the precise accomplishment, before its own time. And the only disappointment which they have ever produced, has been inflicted on the presumption, that disregards this divine enigma, so inscrutable to man. The Jews, for instance, familiar with so many predictions clearly realized in their own history, came at length to interpret all prophecy in the light of past fulfilment: and obliterating the plain distinction, between terms of history and symbols of prophecy, their confident exegesis, of the great messianic burden of the Bible, became a tradition of fatal prejudice, to the exercise, alike, of faith, and reason, and sense, when the true completion in its season arrived—a memorable warning for the dogmatism of every age, that would affect to decipher, what God has purposely hidden, for the hand of his own Almighty Providence, to work out, with wonder, to the observation of men.

3. *It is required, that the fulfilment remove all obscurity of sense from the prediction.* While there is a secret mark of iden-

tification, couched among the symbols of prophetic language, that always invites and rewards, without satisfying the ingenuous reader, before the accomplishment—"serving the threefold purpose, of being a blind to the incurious, a trap to the dogmatical, and an exercise of modesty, of patience, and of sagacity, to the wise"—there is always in the true fulfilment, the evolution of a test, which settles forever the solution of the sacred enigma. Look at the prophecies relating to the Saviour of men, and to every kingdom and metropolis of ancient times; to the overthrow of Persia by Macedon; the subsequent division of the Grecian empire, among the successors of Alexander; the spread of the Roman arms, described by Moses and Daniel; and the ultimate dissolution of that stupendous power; all foretold, with a skill of implication, which no sublunary intelligence could unravel, nor even the prophets who delivered them divine, beyond the use of adoring trust in the Providence of God; but which now lies before us, with all the specialties of history to be seen in its folds—completeness and precision of adjustment, among the metaphors, that rival the most graphic details of the chronicle itself.

It is true, indeed, that ignorance may blur, in man's apprehension, the most beautiful economy of God's wisdom. The drapery of symbols may not be rightly understood; the deposition of history may not be faithfully gathered, and fairly collated; the power of prejudice may cloud the most erudite mind with Egyptian darkness; and there may be, at times, in the web of prophecy itself, a complexity of thread, through the long series of futurities, often foretold together, which the best learning and experience are yet too immature to comprehend, as the scheme is but partly unfolded—these, and other considerations, may fully account for the disagreement among interpreters, respecting a few predictions, which have transpired already in events.

4. *It is required that these prophecies be manifold, in order that no chance may account for the completion of all; and no ignorance, or oversight, may jeopard the force of this argument, by the waste to which we have just adverted. Any shrewd observer of the world might venture a prediction of some future event, from the tendency of causes at work in his day, the progress of human development already observed, or even the whimsey of wanton conjecture; and among the myriad occurrences, in every age, it were strange if such adventure of prophecy would not be followed, sometimes, with striking coincidence of facts.*

Varro informs us, that he heard an augur in his day, Vettius Valens, assert, that the twelve vultures which appeared to Romulus, when he stood on the Palatine hill, contending with his brother Remus, respecting the name of the city they had agreed to build on the Tiber, signified twelve centuries, through which the Roman empire was destined to endure; and history has recorded the fact, that the empire, of which Rome was the centre and capital, was overthrown, almost exactly according to this expository presage, 500 years after it was given.

Again, Seneca sung, (if he be the author of "Medea") the discovery of America, 1400 years before it occurred; in the following general, but most remarkable language:—

"——venient annis
 Secula seris, quibus Oceanus
 Vincula rerum laxit, et ingens
 Pateat tellus, Tiphysque novos
 Detegat orbes; nec sit terris
 Ultima Thule."

Again, it is said, that M. de Cazotte predicted, some years before 1787, with much minuteness, to a large company of intelligent persons in Paris, the atrocities of the Reign of Terror in France—telling Condorcet that he would die in prison, of poison, administered by his own hand, which actually happened—predicting, also, the fate of Louis XVI. and his Queen, and persons are yet living, it is said, who heard these utterances distinctly given, before any one of them was yet fulfilled, and while the prophet was laughed at for his pains. It is well known, also, that traditional soothsayings are abundant in many places of Germany, Westphalia in particular, and all along the Rhine, some of which, it is said, have been remarkably accomplished, in the memorable agitations of 1818 and '49. And a learned Professor in Edinburgh has even broached the hypothesis of a physical medium, between certain highly sensitive constitutions, and the near approach of eventful things, in highly excited times.

Yet what are all these scattered facts—most of them so much like guessing in the vagueness of their terms—although a thousand times better attested than they are, and a thousand times remoter from suspicion of being the cause of their own accomplishment, or being shaped by the mouth of tradition, as it suits the course of probabilities—compared with the vast array of particular prophecies in Scripture, not one of which has ever failed of fulfilment

in its time! Forget not the millions of falsified prediction and augury that are sunk on every side of them, when those "rari in gurgite nantes" are so flippantly proposed!

Not only are the prophecies of inspiration many and various in themselves, but they are, in all important cases, reiterated by many different prophets, at long intervals of separation, in the course of time; thus making the first announcement, by the paraphrases of succeeding seers, a fixed and inflexible cognition, which no ingenuity of man could torture into correspondence with an ultimate event; as might have been the case with a single utterance; and as really is the case with the solitary sights of uninspired prevision.

Nor is it number and repetition alone, which defy the versatility of chance, and privacy of interpretation to enact a title of the accomplishment; but the dignity and importance of their import also—a public concernment, almost always; which could never achieve its fulfilment in a corner; embracing in the range of its wonderful extent, all the mighty monarchies of ancient time, the cities, the countries, the kings, the warriors, the people; Phenicians, Egyptians, Idumeans, Arabians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, Romans, as well as Jews; and the whole magnitude of middle and modern history besides; from the ruin of Pagan Rome, and the rise of Mohammedan imposition, to the downfall of Antichrist, and the reign of Millennial glory—all history forecast in this epitome—with a greatness of particulars, which no philosophy of actual history could equal, in the choice; and not one of the particulars ever taking back its gage, to drop from the oracle in convenient oblivion; not one particular without its own minuteness of specialty, which neither man nor angel can elicit in advance, but which the complete event will recognize to demonstration.

5. *It is required, that these predictions, which would prove a revelation from God, be connected in system, and exhibit a scheme and scope of design, worthy of Him, whose infinite wisdom, elsewhere, always appears in unity of purpose. If, instead of a few surprising coincidences, of a rival character, picked up, here and there, upon the tide of time, we should find them innumerable more than we have reckoned, and more even than the prophecies of inspiration, yet, if they are all disconnected and aimless, while these are compact, and conspicuous for unity of aim, running through all ages, we might still make good the*

demonstration of Divinity on these pages, and on these alone. More difficult would it be, for chance to account for ten related facts in a series, than for ten thousand facts without relation or connection. Nay, more, should we concede, that every plausible response of heathen oracles, and every sagacious or lucky prognostication of any age, were genuine utterances of supernatural knowledge, yet if these predictions of the Bible are the only utterances of the kind, adduced for a particular purpose, and that purpose not only godlike in its meaning, but perfectly unique through all the successions and transmutations of time, the argument stands against all competition. You never reject the testimony of an adequate number of unimpeachable witnesses in court, merely because there may be a multitude of men without, asserting a thousand particular facts, which have no connection with the case on hand, or the point at issue. Why then demur at the result of this converging deposition, which so many voices, throughout so many ages, harmoniously deliver, because forsooth, the world has been replete with other voices, equally mysterious and unearthly, yet all-discordant as the babblers on the plain of Shinar? What boots it the sciolist, when he has gathered the whole magazine of emulous predictions, by pagan augury, tripod, or cave; by the wise politician, the mystical monk, the delirious fanatic, or the mesmeric dreamer; since they are ruled altogether out of court, by the common law of evidence, because they have nothing to say, that is relevant on the suit of man's immortal aspirations—because, without the smallest injury to their pretensions, they cannot witness anything, and much less agree to witness anything—while here is an immense array of perfect agreement, in the most positive declaration that ever was made; a redemption from sin, sorrow, and death, which no imagination of man had ever conceived; and the only religion of facts, doctrines, and morals, which this supernatural attestation was ever employed to establish?

The unity we have here, is not only one of positive testimony, which rival predictions have never attempted, and one of internal concord in which every particular deposes something connected with the great subject of revelation, but one of progressive development, in which a mighty seminal truth is brought forth by each succeeding ray of prophetic announcement, until the manifestation fills earth and heaven with the grandeur of its complete significance. “*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of*

prophecy." He is the grand subject, sum, and centre: there is not a word in this great volume of prophetic wonder which does not relate to Him, in his person, character, or kingdom.

Now, one prophecy such as we have thus far defined, would be sufficient to commend a revelation—would be itself a revelation; and when hundreds of such prophecies on every variety of subject, interesting and important to man, combine, without a contradiction, to challenge our faith, we must concede there is something supernatural in the claim. But when this great variety is all convergent and unique, each particular prediction radiating illustration upon all the rest, each past fulfilment sustaining the expectation of a future, and all, though scattered along scores of centuries in their track, ever pointing to a great refulgent centre, beaming with light, and love, and immortality, for man—who will compute the force of this demonstration, or doubt that the system is entirely from God, omniscient and omnipotent?

Try the cavils and objections of infidelity by the touchstone of this peerless unity.

Is it said, that other well-authenticated instances of successful augury and prophecy, in ancient and in modern times, are so inexplicable, that we may well decline investigating similar mysteries in the Bible? We answer, that, because irregularities appear in every department of nature which cannot be explained, you might just as well decline the study of her laws, that cannot surpass her strange anomalies, either in number or consistency, more than the perfect prophecies of scripture surpass, in variety and system, those casual mysteries of soothsaying which could stand authenticated if the world had taken pains to search them out with the rigor of historical exactness. Far better say, that, because the comet is not traced with satisfaction through its eccentric flight in the abyss of heaven, therefore, we need not watch the planetary orbits, or care to investigate the ordinary movements of our solar system. Is it said, that man's free agency, as a moral creature, is subverted by the notion of such a particular and almighty exercise of Providence as the sure fulfilment of inspired prophecy involves? We answer, that, the freest agency of man is that which acts under the government of laws in the regular administration of a system; and it is the casual and aimless prediction only, which could by irregular accomplishment, infringe upon his freedom. But when you see his destiny involved in the complications of such a system as this, a trans-

cript from the counsels of eternity, so full of grace, for the development of which the world itself is but a platform, and time a handmaid to unroll its resolutions, we might better say, it is freedom to will and act beyond the dictates of nature and reason, than beyond the purview of this influence.

But *the double meaning*, so prevalent in these predictions, we are told, is no better than the ambiguity of pagan oracles. This cavil, besides being logically unfair, is at once confuted by the view of that connection which binds together all ages and all events in one great consummation. Here, "the double sense" can never mean that either of two possible events may fulfil a prophecy, *but that both of them must fulfil it*. Nothing, in fact, more clearly bespeaks the authorship in God himself, than this very manifoldness in the fulfilment of his word, evincing that the true speaker must have had an infinite comprehension and disposal too, of agencies at work in the world, when he could frame a promise or a threat with such expression, as to embrace many similar events (while chiefly referring to but one) which would be effectuated by the most dissimilar means, and in the most diversified and unequal circumstances. Let the objector mark, that the great hypothesis on which we argue is the identity of authorship in prophecy and providence. God only could ordain affinity between the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and that from Babylonish captivity, and that from Syrian cruelty, and that from heathenish darkness, and that from Antichristian despotism; and when we find that one primordial prophecy will include this whole kindred series of events to come, and a later one will make the first of the series when fulfilled an historical basis, for the metaphors with which the remaining mercies are predicted, and for the hope with which they are expected, must we not, so far from stumbling on a doubtfulness in the double sense, perceive that it is the very stamp of God's foreknowledge, as it is the earnest of his own unfailling faithfulness? Who will say, again, that the warning voice of Moses, when he foretold the terrible details of punishment, which would await the apostasy of Israel, was less divinely prophetic, because his word would suit a thousand dispersions of the Jews, which have occurred since it was uttered; or the proud elevation of "the stranger" in their land, either in the yoke of Chaldean, or Syrian, or Roman, or Turkish oppression; or "the tender and delicate woman" eating her own offspring, in the straitness of the siege,

when it was accomplished in the siege of Samaria, and in the siege of Jerusalem, nearly a thousand years asunder, and the first more than a thousand years after the prophet; or the insult and wrong, to which they would be doomed, when these were done continually, from the days of Nebuchadnezzar, to those of Frederick the Great in Prussia?

Without a thread of system, such oracular skill had been infinitely beyond the forecast of Apollo, that never framed even an equivocation, without appearances of near probability: but when we see it travel down a pathway of development, in every age, grouping sequences, of more and more definite and brilliant attestation; by which an honest faith is nourished, from the first apprehension of an ancient promise, till the last exultation of joy, when "the mystery of God is finished" and "the headstone is brought forth with shoutings"—its double sense is only double demonstration, that the inspiration of the Almighty must have given it the very words. So thought Lord Bacon: and speaking of these prophecies, considered in their double sense, he says, "They are of the nature of the Author, with whom a thousand years are as one day; and therefore, they are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have a springing and germinant accomplishment, throughout many ages, though the height and fulness of them may refer to one age."

Thus, also, is explained the hyperbole, with which the prophets describe comparatively small events, near to be fulfilled, in terms that seem to be out of all proportion to their importance. It is the splendor of an ultimate event, in the chain of homogeneous benefits, of which the nearer one, however humble, is an earnest and precursor, that suffuses, in this way, the rapt prevision of the seer. Had there been a prophet commissioned a century since, as in the old theocracy, to counsel the governors of Virginia, in times of fear and trouble, and promise them a triumph over French and savage hostilities upon the border, portraying the peace and prosperity which would follow such a vindication—how naturally would the prophet, on the supposition of a divine afflatus, revealing the future, indefinitely, in regard to all events of the same prosperous kind, describe the proximate deliverances predicted for the colony, in a style of magniloquent expression, borrowed from the ulterior glories of this great Republic, in which the nascent commonwealth he came to comfort, would bear a great proportion. Just in this way, was many a temporal mercy

promised to the visible church, under the old dispensation; the ultimate and crowning mercy under Christ peering on the prophet's soul, with enrapturing and often abrupt captivation, which he himself did not fully understand.

And why should any man of literary taste and culture object to the secondary sense in prophecy, when it is the charm of genius in the earth-born inspirations of epic and dramatic poetry? Take from the *Æneid* of Virgil a pervading allusion to Augustus Cæsar, and what an insipidity of import is left to the whole design, as well as many a most beautiful passage. Take from the *Divina Commedia* of Dante the political factions of Florence, and what a crude conceit would be many a terrible coruscation. Take from the *Fairy Queen* of Spenser the reign and court of Elizabeth, and what remains to give it soul or immortality? There is, in short, through all the best creations of human genius, an intense endeavor after that very perfection which infidelity repudiates in the prophecies of celestial inspiration—a double sense—a primary import, which profits and pleases, most of all, because it bears to the understanding a secondary import, on which the whole production rests, as an ultimate basis of unity and meaning, without which the book would never have been written, and would soon cease to be read or understood.

It is this central unity and perfect system, again, which will explain the confinement of prophecy to one nation, and that one comparatively obscure in secular history, undistinguished by arts or arms, commerce or wealth, though seated in the most conspicuous place upon the globe of ancient geography. The gaze of all men must be fixed on this peculiar people, for one thing alone: "To them," said Philo, "was intrusted the prophetic office for all mankind." Had these prophecies been scattered among many different nations, how impossible would it have been to see the beautiful connection and convergent meaning, which give them all their true significance: or had they been imparted to a people renowned for learning, like the Greeks, or political greatness, like the Latins, how much would they have been overlooked and neglected in the groves of the academy, the bustle of senates, and the turmoil of camps. But imparted to one people, whose whole destiny was the conservation of this lone deposit, how comprehensively might all men see the unity and truth of revealed religion, when its light was matured at length for universal promulgation,

and its slowly concentrated sun broke forth, like the gathered lightning of heaven, to shine from one end of the world to the other.

6. *It is required, that these prophecies be commensurate with all time*: the past, the present, and the future, being covered alike with the scope of their full annunciation. However perfectly connected all events may be in this prophetic economy, no experience or learning can ever enable any man to foretell the recurrence of similar events: for this mighty system, whose centre is Christ, has only one cycle for the world to see, and that, the duration of the world itself: so that there is no repetition of the same things, in a series of cycles, as some have vainly imagined; but all is progress, in a line of plainer and plainer development, until time shall be no longer.

You ask for miracles continued. Here they are—without disturbing nature—in the continued accomplishment of ancient prophecy; which will go on to confirm the truth of our holy religion, with new demonstrations, till the end of the world. Nor will these consist in new disclosures, merely, of old attestations, dug from the dust, or read from the hieroglyphic, by Layards, Champollions, and Gliddons; but in mighty deeds, which are yet to be done by the faithful Providence of God—the downfall of Antichrist from his throne of spiritual despotism—the conversion of the Jews from their hardened infidelity—the extension of the gospel over all benighted paganism—the return of peace, and unity, and love to the whole distracted body of the faithful. These are some of the magnificent things which prophecy has promised, to the hope of our day; and all of them, you will say, quite improbable to the anticipations of reason. What, then, must you think of a religion which would venture to promise them—in an open Bible, scattered abroad over mountain and valley, as dew-drops of the morning? Either it has nothing to lose in losing veracity, or it is more than human. Surely, no religion of man would hazard what ours has gained, and possesses, on such obvious uncertainties, for such prospective advantages. Where are all your soothsayers now? Or, have they left a fragment of vaticination on this earth, to bide the trial of a coming accomplishment? Why, like Elijah of old, are we left alone at this altar, to call down this fire, and forecast the future time, through all the salient points, and eventful epochs, that are to fill the remaining volumes of the world's great history? "Lively oracles," indeed, they are, ever glowing in the heart of piety, ever

gliding in the hand of Providence. Ask me not for living prophets on the very eve of these great changes. We would rather have the ancient—whose expression, like old wine, is all the better for a voyage over many billows of intervening revolution, and half the globe, in the time of its duration. Tell me not that Augustan civilization saw the end of them, and with its searching glance of light put them to silence forever. Precisely then they broke the silence of many centuries, and ceased not their proclamations until the keystone was fixed in the arch, and all remaining time was spanned with its extension.

7. *It is required, that they be philanthropic and benign.* When the Cumæan Sibyl came to Tarquin with her books, which were nine in number, she offered to sell them for a price which the tyrant deemed enormous, and refused. She disappeared immediately, and destroyed three books; and then came back, demanding as much for the remaining six as for the nine. It was again refused, and she retired in wrath to burn three more; and then returned to ask as much for the remaining three as for the whole original number—thus withholding from Rome, and from the world, what the gods had commissioned her to write, because she could not obtain her price in gold. This legend illustrates, far too faintly, the notorious venality and avarice of all heathen oracles. The poor man could never obtain responses from the Delphic Apollo. The rich man was swindled by a hundred frauds, enjoining new lustrations, additional sacrifices, and costlier gifts; and after all, dismissing the tantalized victim without an answer, as often as the case admitted of no safe equivocation. And even when the tripod, or the cave, did respond with its best articulation; and the pillaged votary obtained the most formal and categorical answer to his anxious query; what hope was soothed, what misery assuaged, what virtue strengthened, and what vice reformed? Only the cruel projects of ambition, or the horrid necessities of war and crime, came to those impure retreats for counsel and encouragement.

How different the prophets of the living God. No bribe could buy a Balaam, when filled with the impulse of their true inspiration. Not even a servant to their persons, dared accept a trifling present, from the richest beneficiary, without being blasted with leprosy for life. How calm, and kind, and frank, and dignified, as well as earnest and disinterested! And how pure the morality always inculcated. The primary object of inspired prophecy, was

the publication of absolute and eternal principles of truth and righteousness, as they are centred and sanctioned in the Lord Jesus Christ: and disclosures of futurity were added, because He was future, in respect to incarnation, and because these were needful, in every age, to secure a credit for the lessons of redeeming truth. Like the miracles of Christ, they were twice blessed; they always had a present benefit to work, while founding a solid deposition for the faith of future ages; always some hope to cherish, or sadness to cheer—some oppression to rebuke, or wickedness to warn, while furnishing the latest days, with bulwarks of evidence for the truth of this holy religion—which time was deputed to build out and up, until she herself would find a sepulchre, in some crypt of their deep foundations.

8. *They must, after all, transcend the requisitions of human reason.* We have now gone over, as we think, all the conditions, which man could dictate, for the full persuasion of his mind, that prophecy is divine and supernatural, and that, therefore, the religion it authenticates must be of God, true, and holy, and all important. The claim must be woven on its face, and published in advance—the terms must be, in the main, so purely enigmatical, as to bar any conscious causation of their own accomplishment; and yet significant enough, meanwhile, to answer the present need of faith and hope.—There must be some mark of speciality concealed among the terms, which the fulfilment will recognize, beyond a doubt, wherever there is knowledge enough to read the symbols, and observe aright the facts of history.—There must be great number and variety; so that no chance may account for the completion of all, and no failure of recognition, in some cases, jeopard the utility and force of the whole conclusion. They must be connected in a system, which is worthy of infinite design, in which they have a great scheme to develop; where every particular instance will shed light on every other instance. and the most occult, and indirect, and secondary meaning, may be made the ultimate strength and beauty of the whole. They must always grow in demonstration, and gratify the demand for marvels, in every age, miracle without suspending nature's laws; which they continually work, as new fulfilments of ancient prophecy occur. They must be ever benignant, disinterested and pure, without a single taint of selfishness, or meanness, or corruption in morals. These are your requisitions; and all of them reasonable, considering the high claims of my subject; and

are they not more than met, in the exuberant perfections of inspired prophecy?

It may be, that I have failed, for want of time, or ability, or both, to meet objections rightly, with that ample and adequate solution, which the subject fairly affords. But I am sure, your faith would not be satisfied, if I had succeeded in relieving reason from her whole embarrassment with prophecy: for its very nature implies an immediate communication, of an infinite mind to finite minds, and therefore some incomprehensibility, which, for us to remove, would be the greatest failure that could occur, in such investigation. It would be not to solve a problem, in the way of lodging light in the soul; but to dissolve a link, which connects our theme itself with the source of all light and knowledge. It cannot be from God, and yet circumscribed by man. The only discussion, that dares to tread the whole circumference of its connections, is absurd Neology—which always begs the question, in order to deny it—which would quench the sun, at meridian day, for no other reason, than because it is fixed in heaven, and take a lamp through the universe, because it is portable to “the critical feeling.”

We may not comprehend, how the soul of man is subject to the heavenly afflatus; how the peculiarity of each prophet's genius and taste, should be suffered to tinge the pure revelation of God by his mouth; or how he could faithfully and fully enunciate times and events which he did not himself understand. We may not comprehend, why the centre of prophecy was fixed just where it is, in the progressions of time; why the promise of God to the Fathers, was placed so dimly and distantly before them, and the triumphs of the great accomplishment with us, have been so partial, and slow, and clouded in prospect—a thousand minor embarrassments like these may spring up, which this man and that may answer or not, to his own satisfaction, and that of others. But we answer them all, with the simple averment, that, were they a hundred-fold more embarrassing and dark, they would only confirm the conviction of well-regulated reason, with the crowning demonstration they afford, of God's finger—whose traces cannot be perfectly explained, unless the finite can measure the infinite, or human reason, like the *Aeon of Valentinus*, in her vain ambition to comprehend the Almighty, should propagate a *Demiurge* from heaven, whose hand detailed the Jewish prophets, and whose work of perversion, and prophecy, alike the Christ came

only to destroy. Wicked absurdity, or silly fable, must always be the refuge of that proud wisdom, which doubts the attestation of divinity, because the signet of Omniscience is not altogether like our own ; because a part of his ways must be the limit of his condescension ; and because he would incite our trust and admiration, through a whole eternity, by the simple and sublime conviction, that " we shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord."