

WHEN WERE OUR GOSPELS WRITTEN?

by

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PREFATORY NOTE TO FOURTH EDITION

SINCE this pamphlet was originally penned in 1867, the author of "Supernatural Religion" has in his three volumes placed a very storehouse of information within the easy reach of every student, and many of Dr. Tischendorf's reckless statements have been effectively dealt with in that masterly work. In the present brief pamphlet there is only the very merest index to matters which in "Supernatural Religion" are exhaustively treated. Part II of "The Freethinkers' Text-Book," by Mrs Besant, has travelled over the same ground with much care, and has given exact reference to authorities on each point.

WHEN WERE OUR GOSPELS WRITTEN?

AN ANSWER TO THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

THE Religious Tract Society, some time since, issued, prefaced with their high commendation, a translation of a pamphlet by Dr. Constantine Tischendorf, entitled "When were our Gospels Written?" In the introductory preface we are not unfairly told that "on the credibility of the four Gospels the whole of Christianity rests, as a building on its foundations." It is proposed in this brief essay to deal with the character of Dr. Tischendorf's advocacy, then to examine the genuineness of the four Gospels, as affirmed by the Religious Tract Society's pamphlet, and at the same time to ascertain, so far as is possible in the space, how far the Gospel narrative is credible.

The Religious Tract Society state that Dr. Tischendorf's *brochure* is a repetition of "arguments for the genuineness and authenticity of the four Gospels," which the erudite Doctor had previously published for the learned classes, "with explanations" now given in addition, to render the arguments "intelligible" to meaner capacities; and as the "Infidel" and "Deist" are especially referred to as likely to be overthrown by this pamphlet, we may presume that the society considers that in the 119 pages — which the translated essay occupies — they have presented the best paper that can be issued on their behalf for popular reading on this question. The praise accorded by the society, and sundry laudations appropriated with much modesty in his own preface by Dr. Constantine Tischendorf to himself, compel one at the outset to regard the Christian manifesto as a most formidable production. The Society's translator impressively tells us that the pamphlet has been three times printed in Germany and twice in France; that it has been issued in Dutch and Russian, and is done into Italian by an Archbishop with the actual approbation of the Pope. The author's preface adds an account of his great journeyings and heavy travelling expenses incurred out of an original capital of a "few unpaid bills," ending in the discovery of a basketful of old parchments destined for the flames by the Christian monks in charge, but which from the hands of Dr. Tischendorf are used by the Religious Tract Society to neutralise all doubts, and to "blow to pieces" the Rationalistic criticism of Germany and the coarser Infidelity of England. Doubtless Dr. Tischendorf and the Society consider it some evidence in favor of the genuineness and authenticity of the four Gospels that the learned Doctor was enabled to spend 5,000 dollars out of less than nothing, and that the Pope regards his pamphlet with favor, or they would not trouble to print such statements. We frankly accord them the full advantage of any argument which may fairly be based on such facts. An autograph

letter of endorsement by the Pope is certainly a matter which a Protestant Tract Society — who regard “the scarlet whore at Babylon” with horror — may well be proud of.

Dr. Tischendorf states that he has since 1839 devoted himself to the textual study of the New Testament, and it ought to be interesting to the orthodox to know that, as a result of twenty-seven years’ labor, he now declares that “it has been placed beyond doubt that the original text . . . had in many places undergone such serious modifications of meaning as to leave us in painful uncertainty as to what the apostles had actually written,” and that “the right course to take” “is to set aside the received text altogether and to construct a fresh text.”

This is pleasant news for the true believer, promulgated by authority of the managers of the great Christian depôt in Paternoster Row, from whence many scores of thousands of copies of this incorrect received text have nevertheless been issued without comment to the public, even since the society have published in English Dr. Tischendorf’s declaration of its unreliable character.

With the modesty and honorable reticence peculiar to great men, Dr. Tischendorf records his successes in reading hitherto unreadable parchments, and we learn that he has received approval from “several learned bodies, and even from crowned heads,” for his wonderful performances. As a consistent Christian, who knows that the “powers that be are ordained of God,” our “critic without rival,” for so he prints himself, regards the praise of crowned heads as higher in degree than that of learned bodies.

The Doctor discovered in 1844 the MS on which he now relies to confute audacious Infidelity, in the Convent of St. Catherine at Sinai; he brought away a portion, and handed that portion, on his return, to the Saxon Government — they paying all expenses. The Doctor, however, did not then divulge where he had found the MS. It was for the advantage of humankind that the place should be known at once, for, at least, two reasons. First, because by aid of the remainder of this MS — “the most precious Bible treasure in existence” — the faulty text of the New Testament was to be reconstructed; and the sooner the work was done the better for believers in Christianity. And, secondly, the whole story of the discovery might then have been more easily confirmed in every particular.

For fifteen years, at least, Dr. Tischendorf hid from the world the precise locality in which his treasure had been discovered. Nay, he was even fearful when he knew that other Christians were trying to find the true text, and he experienced “peculiar satisfaction” when he ascertained that his silence had misled some pious searchers after reliable copies of God’s message to all humankind; although all this time he was well aware that our received copies of God’s revelation had undergone “serious modi-

fictions” since the message had been delivered from the Holy Ghost by means of the Evangelists.

In 1853, “nine years after the original discovery,” Dr. Tischendorf again visited the Sinai convent, but although he had “enjoined on the monks to take religious care” of the remains of which they, on the former occasion, would not yield up possession, he, on this second occasion, and apparently after careful search, discovered “eleven short lines,” which convinced him that the greater part of the MS had been destroyed. He still, however, kept the place secret, although he had no longer any known reason for so doing; and, having obtained an advance of funds from the Russian Government, he, in 1859, tried a third time for his “pearl of St. Catherine,” which, in 1853, he felt convinced had been destroyed, and as to which he had nevertheless, in the meantime, been troubled by fears that the good cause might be aided by some other than Dr. Tischendorf discovering and publishing the “priceless treasure,” which, according to his previous statements, he must have felt convinced did not longer exist. On this third journey the Doctor discovered “the very fragments which, fifteen years before, he had taken out of the basket,” “and also other parts of the Old Testament, the New Testament complete, and, in addition, Barnabas and part of Hermas.”

With wonderful preciseness, and with great audacity, Dr. Tischendorf *refers* the transcription of the discovered Bible to the first half of the fourth century. Have Dr. Tischendorf’s patrons here ever read of MSS discovered in the same Convent of St. Catherine, at Sinai, of which an account was published by Dr. Constantine Simonides, and concerning which the *Westminster Review* said, “We share the suspicions, to use the gentlest word which occurs to us, entertained, we believe, by all competent critics and antiquarians.”

In 1863 Dr. Tischendorf published, at the cost of the Russian Emperor, a splendid but very costly edition of his Sinaitic MS in columns, with a Latin introduction. The book is an expensive one, and copies of it are not very plentiful in England. Perhaps the Religious Tract Society have not contributed to its circulation so liberally as did the pious Emperor of all the Russias. Surely a text on which our own is to be re-constructed ought to be in the hands at least of every English clergyman and Young Men’s Christian Association.

“Christianity,” writes Dr. Tischendorf, “does not, strictly speaking, rest on the moral teaching of Jesus;” “it rests on his person only.” “If we are in error in believing in the person of Christ as taught in the Gospels, then the Church herself is in error, and must be given up as a deception.” “All the world knows that our Gospels are nothing else than biographies of Christ.” “We have no other source of information with respect to the life of Jesus.”

So that, according to the Religious Tract Society and its advocate, if the credibility of the Gospel biography be successfully impugned, then the foundations of Christianity are destroyed. It becomes, therefore, of the highest importance to show that the biography of Jesus, as given in the four Gospels, is absolutely incredible and self-contradictory.

It is alleged in the Society's preface that all the objections of infidelity have been hitherto unavailing. This is, however, not true. It is rather the fact that the advocates of Christianity when defeated on one point have shuffled to another, either quietly passing the topic without further debate, or loudly declaring that the point abandoned was really so utterly unimportant that it was extremely foolish in the assailant to regard it as worthy attack, and that, in any case, all the arguments had been repeatedly refuted by previous writers.

To the following objections to the Gospel narrative the writer refuses to accept as answer, that they have been previously discussed and disposed of.

The Gospels which are yet mentioned by the names popularly associated with each do not tell us the hour, or the day, or the month, or — save Luke — the year, in which Jesus was born. The only point on which the critical divines, who have preceded Dr. Tischendorf, generally agree is, that Jesus was not born on Christmas day. The Oxford Chronology, collated with a full score of recognised authorities, gives us a period of more than seven years within which to place the date. So confused is the story as to the time of the birth, that while Matthew would make Jesus born in the lifetime of Herod, Luke would fix the period of Jesus's birth as after Herod's death.

Christmas itself is a day surrounded with curious ceremonies of pagan origin, and in no way serving to fix the 25th December as the natal day. Yet the exact period at which Almighty God, as a baby boy, entered the world to redeem long-suffering humanity from the consequences of Adam's ancient sin, should be of some importance.

Nor is there any great certainty as to the place of birth of Christ. The Jews, apparently in the very presence of Jesus, reproached him that he ought to have been born at Bethlehem. Nathaniel regarded him as of Nazareth. Jesus never appears to have said to either, "I was born at Bethlehem." In Matthew ii, 6, we find a quotation from the prophet: "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least amongst the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people-Israel." Matthew lays the scene of the birth in Bethlehem, and Luke adopts the same place, especially bringing the child to Bethlehem for that purpose, and Matthew tells us it is done to fulfil a prophecy. Micah v, 2, the only place in which similar words occur,

is not a prophecy referring to Jesus at all. The words are: “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 is not quoted correctly in Matthew, and can hardly be said by any straining of language to apply to Jesus. The credibility of a story on which Christianity rests is bolstered up by prophecy in default of contemporary corroboration. The difficulties are not lessened in tracing the parentage. In Matthew i, 17, it is stated that “the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.” Why has Matthew made such a mistake in his computation of the genealogies — in the last division we have only thirteen names instead of fourteen, even including the name of Jesus? Is this one of the cases of “painful uncertainty” which has induced the Religious Tract Society and Dr. Tischendorf to wish to set aside the *textus receptus* altogether?

From David to Zorobabel there are in the Old Testament twenty generations; in Matthew, seventeen generations; and in Luke, twenty-three generations. In Matthew from David to Christ there are twenty-eight generations, and in Luke from David to Christ forty-three generations. Yet, according to the Religious Tract Society, it is on the credibility of these genealogies as part of the Gospel history that the foundation of Christianity rests. The genealogy in the first Gospel arriving at David traces to Jesus through Solomon; the third Gospel from David traces through Nathan. In Matthew the names from David are Solomon, Roboam, Abia, Asa, Josaphat, Joram, Ozias; and in the Old Testament we trace the same names from David to Ahaziah, whom I presume to be the same as Ozias. But in 2nd Chronicles xxii, 11, we find one Joash, who is not mentioned in Matthew at all. If the genealogy in Matthew is correct, why is the name not mentioned? Amaziah is mentioned in chap. xxiv, v. 27, and in chap. xxvi, v. 1, Uzziah, neither of whom [is] mentioned in Matthew, where Ozias is named as begetting Jotham, when in fact three generations of men have come in between. In Matthew and Luke, Zorobabel is represented as the son of Salathiel, while in 1 Chronicles iii, 17-19, Zerubbabel is stated to be the son of Pedaiah, the brother of Salathiel. Matthew says Abiud was the son of Zorobabel (chap. i, v. 13). Luke iii, 27, says Zorobabel’s son was Rhesa. The Old Testament contradicts both, and gives Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith, their sister (1 Chronicles iii, 19), as the names of Zorobabel’s children. Is this another piece of evidence in favor of Dr. Tischendorf’s admirable doctrine, that it is necessary to reconstruct the text?

In the genealogies of Matthew and Luke there are only three names agreeing after that of David, viz., Salathiel, Zorobabel, and Joseph — all the rest are utterly different. The attempts at explanation which have been hitherto offered, in order to reconcile these genealogies, are scarcely creditable to the intellects of the Christian apologists. They allege that “Joseph, who by nature was the son of Jacob, in the account of the law was the son of Heli. For Heli and Jacob were brothers by the same mother, and Heli, who was the elder, dying without issue, Jacob, as the law directed, married his widow; in consequence of such marriage, his son Joseph was reputed in the law the son of Heli.” This is pure invention to get over a difficulty — an invention not making the matter one whit more clear. For if you suppose that these two persons were brothers, then unless you invent a death of the mother’s last husband and the widow’s remarriage Jacob and Heli would be the sons of the same father, and the list of the ancestors should be identical in each genealogy. But to get over the difficulty the pious do this. They say, although brothers, they were only half- brothers; although sons of the same mother, they were not sons of the same father, but had different fathers. If so, how is it that Salathiel and Zorobabel occur as father and son in both genealogies? Another fashion of accounting for the contradiction is to give one as the genealogy of Joseph and the other as the genealogy of Mary. “Which?” “Luke,” it is said. Why Luke? what are Luke’s words? Luke speaks of Jesus being, “as was supposed, the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli.” When Luke says Joseph, the son of Heli, [does] he mean Mary, the daughter of Heli? Does the Gospel say one thing and mean another? because if that argument is worth anything, then in every case where a man has a theory which disagrees with the text, he may say the text means something else. If this argument be permitted we must abandon in Scriptural criticism the meaning which we should ordinarily intend to convey by any given word. If you believe Luke meant daughter, why does the same word mean son in every other case all through the remainder of the genealogy? And if the genealogy of Matthew be that of Joseph, and the genealogy of Luke be that of Mary, they ought not to have any point of agreement at all until brought to David. They, nevertheless, do agree and contradict each other in several places, destroying the probability of their being intended as distinct genealogies. There is some evidence that Luke does not give the genealogy of Mary in the Gospel itself. We are told that Joseph went to Bethlehem to be numbered because he was of the house of David: if it had been Mary it would have surely said so. As according to the Christian theory, Joseph was not the father of Jesus, it is not unfair to ask how it can be credible that Jesus’s genealogy could be traced to David in any fashion through Joseph?

So far from Mary being clearly of the tribe of Judah (to which the genealogy relates) her cousinship to Elizabeth would make her rather appear to belong to the tribe of Levi.

To discuss the credibility of the miraculous conception and birth would be to insult the human understanding. The mythologies of Greece, Italy, and India, give many precedents of sons of Gods miraculously born. Italy, Greece, and India, must, however, yield the palm to Judea. The incarnate Christna must give way to the incarnate Christ. A miraculous birth would be scouted today as monstrous; antedate it 2,000 years and we worship it as miracle.

Matt. i, 22, 23, says: "Now all this was done, that it 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, which being interpreted is, God with us." This is supposed to be a quotation from Isaiah vii, 14-16: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."

But in this, as indeed in most other cases of inaccurate quotation, the very words are omitted which would show its utter inapplicability to Jesus. Even in those which are given, the agreement is not complete. Jesus was not called Emmanuel. And even if his mother Mary were a virgin, this does not help the identity, as the word **עלמה** OLME in Isaiah, rendered "virgin" in our version, does not convey the notion of virginity, for which the proper word is **בתולה** BeThULE; OLME is used of a youthful spouse recently married. The allusion to the land being forsaken of both her kings, omitted in Matthew, shows how little the passage is prophetic of Jesus.

The story of the annunciation made to Joseph in one Gospel, to Mary in the other, is hardly credible on any explanation. If you assume the annunciations as made by a God of all-wise purpose, the purpose should, at least, have been to prevent doubt of Mary's chastity; but the annunciation is made to Joseph only after Mary is suspected by Joseph. Two annunciations are made, one of them in a dream to Joseph, when he is suspicious as to the state of his betrothed wife; the other made by the angel Gabriel (whoever that angel may be) to Mary herself, who apparently conceals the fact, and is content to be married, although with child not by her intended husband. The statement — that Mary being found with child by the Holy Ghost, her husband, not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily — is quite incredible. If Joseph found her with child *by the Holy Ghost*, how

could he even think of making a public example of her shame when there was nothing of which she could be ashamed — nothing, if he believed in the Holy Ghost, of which he need have been ashamed himself, nothing which need have induced him to wish to put her away privily. It is clear — according to Matthew — that Mary was found with child, and that the Holy Ghost parentage was not even imagined by Joseph until after he had dreamed about the matter.

Although the birth of Jesus was specially announced by an angel, and although Mary sang a joyful song consequent on the annunciation, corroborated by her cousin's greeting, yet when Simeon speaks of the child, in terms less extraordinary, Joseph and Mary are surprised at it and do not understand it. Why were they surprised? Is it credible that so little regard was paid to the miraculous annunciation? Or is this another case of the "painful uncertainty" alluded to by Dr. Teschendorf?

Again, when Joseph and Mary found the child Jesus in the temple, and he says, "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" they do not know what he means, so that either what the angel had said had been of little effect, or the annunciations did not occur at all. Can any reliance be placed on a narrative so contradictory? An angel was specially sent to acquaint a mother that her son about to be born is the Son of God, and yet that mother is astonished when her son says, "Wist ye not I must be about my father's business?"

The birth of Jesus was, according to Matthew, made publicly known by means of certain wise men. These men saw his star in the East, but it did not tell them much, for they were obliged to come and ask information from Herod the King. Is astrology credible? Herod inquired of the chief priests and scribes; and it is evident Jeremiah was right, if he said, "The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means," for these chief priests misquoted to suit their purposes, and invented a false prophecy by omitting a few words from, and adding a few words to, a text until it suited their purpose. The star, after they knew where to go, and no longer required its aid, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was. The credibility of this will be better understood if the reader notice some star, and then see how many houses it will be over. Luke does not seem to have been aware of the star story, and he relates about an angel who tells some shepherds the good tidings, but this last-named adventure does not appear to have happened in the reign of Herod at all. Is it credible that Jesus was born twice? After the wise men had left Jesus, an angel warned Joseph to flee with him and Mary into Egypt, and Joseph did fly, and remained there with the young child and his mother until the death of Herod; and this, it is alleged, was done to fulfil a prophecy. On referring to Hosea xi, 1,

we find the words have no reference whatever to Jesus, and that, therefore, either the tale of the flight is invented as a fulfilment of the prophecy, or the prophecy manufactured to support the tale of the flight. The Jesus of Luke never went into Egypt at all in his childhood. Directly after the birth of the child his parents instead of flying away because of persecution into Egypt, went peacefully up to Jerusalem to fulfil all things according to the law, returned thence to Nazareth, and apparently dwelt there, going up to Jerusalem every year until Jesus was twelve years of age.

In Matthew ii, 15, we are told that Jesus remained in Egypt, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." In Hosea ii, 1, we read, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." In no other prophet is there any similar text. This not only is not a prophecy of Jesus, but is, on the contrary, a reference to the Jewish Exodus from Egypt. Is the prophecy manufactured to give an air of credibility to the Gospel history, or how will the Religious Tract Society explain it? The Gospel writings betray either a want of good faith, or great incapacity on the part of their authors in the mode adopted of distorting quotations from the Old Testament?

When Jesus began to be about thirty years of age he was baptised by John in the river Jordan. John, who, according to Matthew, knew him, forbade him directly he saw him; but, according to the writer of the fourth Gospel, he knew him not, and had, therefore, no occasion to forbid him. God is an "invisible" "spirit," whom no man hath seen (John i, 18), or can see (Exodus xxxiii, 20); but the man John saw the spirit of God descending like a dove. God is everywhere, but at that time was in heaven, from whence he said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Although John heard this from God's own mouth, he some time after sent two of his disciples to Jesus to inquire if he were really the Christ (Matthew xi, 2, 3). Yet it is upon the credibility of this story, says Dr. Teschendorf, that Christianity rests like a building on its foundations.

It is utterly impossible John could have known and not have known Jesus at the same time. And if, as the New Testament states, God is infinite and invisible, it is incredible that as Jesus stood in the river to be baptised, the Holy Ghost was seen as it descended on his head as a dove, and that God from heaven said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Was the indivisible and invisible spirit of God separated in three distinct and two separately visible persons? How do the Religious Tract Society reconcile this with the Athanasian Creed?

The baptism narrative is rendered doubtful by the language used as to John, who baptised Jesus. It is said, "This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying

in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Isaiah xl, 1-5, is, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him 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: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed." These verses have not the most remote relation to John? And this manufacture of prophecies for the purpose of bolstering up a tale, serves to prove that the writer of the Gospel tries by these to impart an air of credibility to an otherwise incredible story.

Immediately after the baptism, Jesus is led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. There he fasts forty days and forty nights.

John says, in chapter i, 35, "Again, the next day after, John stood and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." Then, at the 43rd verse, he says, "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, follow me." And in chapter ii, 1, he says, "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus was called and his disciples unto the marriage." According to Matthew, there can be no doubt that immediately after the baptism Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. And we are to believe that Jesus was tempted of the Devil and fasting in the wilderness, and at the same time feasting at a marriage in Cana of Galilee? Is it possible to believe that Jesus actually did fast forty days and forty nights? If Jesus did not fast in his capacity as man, in what capacity did he fast? And if Jesus fasted, being God, the fast would be a mockery; and the account that he became a hungered must be wrong. It is barely possible that in some very abnormal condition or cataleptic state, or state of trance, a man might exist, with very slight nourishment or without food, but that a man could walk about, speak, and act, and, doing this, live forty days and nights without food is simply an impossibility.

Is the story that the Devil tempted Jesus credible? If Jesus be God, can the Devil tempt God? A clergyman of the Church of England writing on this says: "That the Devil should appear personally to the Son of God is certainly not more wonderful than that he should, in a more remote age, have appeared among the sons of God, in the presence of God himself, to torment the righteous Job. But that Satan should carry Jesus bodily and literally

through the air, first to the top of a high mountain, and then to the topmost pinnacle of the temple, is wholly inadmissible, it is an insult to our understanding, and an affront to our great creator and redeemer." Supposing, despite the monstrosity of such a supposition, an actual Devil — and this involves the dilemma that the Devil must either be God-created, or God's co-eternal rival; the first supposition being inconsistent with God's goodness, and the second being inconsistent with his power; but supposing such a Devil, is it credible that the Devil should tempt the Almighty maker of the universe with "all these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me?"

In the very names of the twelve Apostles there is an uncertainty as to one, whose name was either Lebbæus, Thaddæus, or Judas. It is in Matthew x, 3, alone that the name of Lebbæus is mentioned, thus — "Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus." We are told, on this point, by certain Biblicists, that some early MSS have not the words "whose surname was Thaddæus," and that these words have probably been inserted to reconcile the Gospel according to Matthew with that attributed to Mark. In the English version of the Rheims Testament used in this country by our Roman Catholic brethren, the reconciliation between Matthew and Mark is completed by omitting the words "Lebbæus whose surname was," leaving only the name "Thaddæus" in Matthew's text. The revised version of the New Testament now agrees with the Rheims version, and the omission will probably meet with the entire concurrence of Dr. Tischendorf and the Religious Tract Society, now they boast autograph letters of approval from the infallible head of the Catholic Church. If Matthew x, 3, and Mark iii, 18, be passed as reconciled, although the first calls the twelfth disciple Lebbæus, and the second gives him the name Thaddæus; there is yet the difficulty that in Luke vi, 16, corroborated by John xiv, 22, there is a disciple spoken of as "Judas, not Iscariot," "Judas, the brother of James." Commentators have endeavored to clear away this last difficulty by declaring that Thaddæus is a Syriac word, having much the same meaning as Judas. This has been answered by the objection that if Matthew's Gospel uses Thaddæus in lieu of Judas, then he ought to speak of Thaddæus Iscariot, which he does not; and it is further objected also that while there are some grounds for suggesting a Hebrew original for the Gospel attributed to Matthew, there is not the slightest pretence for alleging that Matthew wrote in Syriac. The Gospels also leave us in some doubt as to whether Matthew is Levi, or whether Matthew and Levi are two different persons.

The account of the calling of Peter is replete with contradictions. According to Matthew, when Jesus first saw Peter, the latter was in a vessel fishing with his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea of Galilee. Jesus walking by the sea said to them —

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” The two brothers did so, and they became Christ’s disciples. When Jesus called Peter no one was with him but his brother Andrew. A little further on, the two sons of Zebedee were in a ship with their father mending nets, and these latter were separately called. From John, we learn that Andrew was originally a disciple of John the Baptist, and that when Andrew first saw Jesus, Peter was not present, but Andrew went and found Peter who, if fishing, must have been angling on land, telling him “we have found the Messiah,” and that Andrew then brought Peter to Jesus, who said, “Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas.” There is no mention in John of the sons of Zebedee being a little further on, or of any fishing in the sea of Galilee. This call is clearly on land. Luke’s Gospel states that when the call took place, Jesus and Peter were both at sea. Jesus had been preaching to the people, who pressing upon him, he got into Simon’s ship, from which he preached. After this he directed Simon to put out into the deep and let down the nets. Simon answered, “Master, we have toiled all night and taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.” No sooner was this done, than the net was filled to breaking, and Simon’s partners, the two sons of Zebedee, came to help, when at the call of Jesus, they brought their ships to land, and followed him.

Is it credible that there were three several calls, or that the Gospels being inspired, you could have three contradictory versions of the same event? Has the story been here “painfully modified,” or how do Dr. Tischendorf and the Religious Tract Society clear up the matter? Is it credible that, as stated in Luke, Jesus had visited Simon’s house, and cured Simon’s wife’s mother, before the call of Simon, but did not go to Simon’s house for that purpose, until after the call of Simon, as related in Matthew? It is useless to reply that the date of Jesus’s visit is utterly unimportant, when we are told that it is upon the credibility of the complete narrative that Christianity must rest. Each stone is important to the building, and it is not competent for the Christian advocate to regard as useless any word which the Holy Ghost has considered important enough to reveal.

Are the miracle stories credible? Every ancient nation has had its miracle workers, but modern science has relegated all miracle history to realms of fable, myth, illusion, delusion, or fraud. Can Christian miracles be made, the exceptions? Is it likely that the nations amongst whom the dead were restored to life would have persistently ignored the author of such miracles? Were the miracles purposeless, or if intended to convince the Jews, was God unable to render his intentions effective? That five thousand persons should be fed with five loaves and two fishes, and that an apparent excess should remain beyond the original stock, is dif-

difficult to believe; but that shortly after this — Jesus having to again perform a similar miracle for four thousand persons — his own disciples should ignore his recent feat, and wonder from whence the food was to be derived, is certainly startlingly incredible. If this exhibition of incredulity were pardonable on the part of the twelve apostles, living witnesses of greater wonders, how much more pardonable the unbelief of the sceptic of to-day, which the Religious Tract Society seek to overcome by a faint echo of asserted events all contrary to probability, and with nineteen centuries intervening.

The casting out the devils presents phænomena requiring considerable credulity, especially the story of the devils and the swine. To-day insanity is never referable to demoniacal possession, but eighteen hundred years ago the subject of lunacy had not been so patiently investigated as it has been since. That one man could now be tenanted by several devils is a proposition for which the maintainer would in the present generation incur almost universal contempt; yet the repudiation of its present possibility can hardly be consistent with implicit credence in its ancient history. That the devils and God should hold converse together, although not without parallel in the book of Job, is inconsistent with the theory of an infinitely good Deity; that the devils should address Jesus as son of the most high God, and beg to be allowed to enter a herd of swine, is at least ludicrous; yet all this helps to make up the narrative on which Dr. Tischendorf relies. That Jesus being God should pray to his Father that “the cup might pass from” him is so incredible that even the faithful ask us to regard it as mystery. That an angel from heaven could strengthen Jesus, the almighty God, is equally mysterious. That where Jesus had so prominently preached to thousands, the priests should need any one like Judas to betray the founder of Christianity with a kiss, is absurd; his escapade in flogging the dealers, his wonderful cures, and his raising Lazarus and Jairus’s daughter should have secured him, if not the nation’s love, faith, and admiration, at least a national reputation and notoriety. It is not credible if Judas betrayed Jesus by a kiss that the latter should have been arrested upon his own statement that he was Jesus. That Peter should have had so little faith as to deny his divine leader three times in a few hours is only reconcilable with the notion that he had remained unconvinced by his personal intercourse with the incarnate Deity. The mere blunders in the story of the denial sink into insignificance in face of this major difficulty. Whether the cock did or did not crow before the third denial, whether Peter was or was not in the same apartment with Jesus at the time of the last denial, are comparatively trifling questions, and the contradictions on which they are based may be the consequence of the errors which Dr. Tischendorf says have crept into the sacred writings.

Jesus said, “as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Jesus was crucified on Friday, was buried on Friday evening, and yet the first who went to the grave on the night of Saturday as it began to dawn towards Sunday, found the body of Jesus already gone. Did Jesus mean he should be three days and three nights in the grave? Is there any proof that his body remained in the grave for three hours? Who went first to the grave? was it Mary Magdalene alone, as in John, or two Marys as in Matthew, or the two Marys and Salome as in Mark, or the two Marys, Joanna, and several unnamed women as in Luke? To whom did Jesus first appear? Was it, as in Mark, to Mary Magdalene, or to two disciples going to Emmaus, as in Luke, or to the two Marys near the sepulchre, as in Matthew? Is the eating boiled fish and honeycomb by a dead God credible? Did Jesus ascend to heaven the very day of his resurrection, or did an interval of nearly six weeks intervene?

Is this history credible, contained as it is in four contradictory biographies, outside which biographies we have, as Dr. Tischendorf admits, “no other source of information with respect to the life of Jesus?” This history of an earth-born Deity, descended through a crime-tainted ancestry, and whose genealogical tree is traced through one who was not his father; this history of an infinite God nursed as a baby, growing through childhood to manhood like any frail specimen of humanity; this history, garnished with bedevilled men, enchanted fig tree, myriads of ghosts, and scores of miracles, and by such garnishment made more akin to an oriental romance than to a sober history; this picture of the infinite invisible spirit incarnate visible as man; immutability subject to human passions and infirmities; the creator come to die, yet wishing to escape the death which shall bring peace to his God-tormented creatures; God praying to himself and rejecting his own prayer; God betrayed by a divinely-appointed traitor; God the immortal dying, and in the agony of the death-throes — stronger than the strong man’s will — crying with almost the last effort of his dying breath, that he being God, is God forsaken!

If all this be credible, what story is there any man need hesitate to believe?

Dr. Tischendorf asks how it has been possible to impugn the credibility of the four Gospels, and replies that this has been done by denying that the Gospels were written by the men whose names they bear. In the preceding pages it has been shown that the credibility of the Gospel narrative is impugned because it is uncorroborated by contemporary history, because it is self-contradictory, and because many of its incidents are *prima facie* most improbable, and some of them utterly impossible. Even English Infidels are quite prepared to admit that the four Gospels may be

quite anonymous; and yet, that their anonymous character need be of no weight as an argument against their truth. All that is urged on this head is that the advocates of the Gospel history have sought to endorse and give value to the otherwise unreliable narratives by a pretence that some of the Evangelists, at least, were eyewitnesses of the events they refer to. Dr. Teschendorf says: "The credibility of a writer clearly depends on the interval of time which lies between him and the events which he describes. The farther the narrator is removed from the facts which he lays before us the more his claims to credibility are reduced in value." Presuming truthfulness in intention for any writer, and his ability to comprehend the facts he is narrating, and his freedom from a prejudice which may distort the picture he intends to paint correctly with his pen: we might admit the correctness of the passage we have quoted; but can these always be presumed in the case of the authors of the Gospels? On the contrary, a presumption in an exactly opposite direction may be fairly raised from the fact that immediately after the Apostolic age the Christian world was flooded with forged testimonies in favor of the biography of Jesus, or in favor of his disciples.

A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* observes: "To say nothing of such acknowledged forgeries as the Apostolic constitutions and liturgies, and the several spurious Gospels, the question of the genuineness of the alleged remains of the Apostolic fathers, though often overlooked, is very material. Any genuine remains of the 'Apostle' Barnabas, of Hermas, the contemporary (Romans xvi, 14), and Clement, the highly commended and gifted fellow laborer of St. Paul (Phil, iv, 3), could scarcely be regarded as less sacred than those of Mark and Luke, of whom personally we know less. It is purely a question of criticism. At the present day, the critics best competent to determine it, have agreed in opinion, that the extant writings ascribed to Barnabas and Hermas are wholly spurious — the frauds of a later age. How much suspicion attaches to the 1st Epistle of Clement (for the fragment of the second is also generally rejected) is manifest from the fact, that in modern times it has never been allowed the place expressly assigned to it among the canonical books prefixed to the celebrated Alexandrian MS, in which the only known copy of it is included. It must not be forgotten that Ignatius expressly lays claim to inspiration, that Irenæus quotes Hermas as Scripture, and Origen speaks of him as inspired, while Polycarp, in modestly disclaiming to be put on a level with the Apostles, clearly implies there would have been no essential distinction in the way of his being ranked in the same order. But the question is, how are these pretensions substantiated?" So far the *Edinburgh Review*, certainly not an Infidel publication.

Eusebius, in his "Ecclesiastical History," admits the existence of many spurious gospels and epistles, and some writings put forward by him as genuine, such as the correspondence between Jesus and Agbaras, have since been rejected as fictitious. It is not an unfair presumption from this that many of the most early Christians considered the then existing testimonies insufficient to prove the history of Jesus, and good reason is certainly afforded for carefully examining the whole of the evidences they have bequeathed us.

On p. 48, Dr. Tischendorf quotes Irenæus, whose writings belong to the extreme end of the second century, as though that Bishop must be taken as vouching the four Gospels as we now have them. Yet, if the testimony of Irenæus be reliable ("Against Heresies," Book III, cap. i.) the Gospel attributed to Matthew was believed to have been composed in Hebrew, and Irenæus says that as the Jews desired a Messiah of the royal line of David, Matthew having the same desire to a yet greater degree, strove to give them full satisfaction. This may account for some of the genealogical curiosities to which we have drawn attention, but hardly renders Matthew's Gospel more reliable; and how can the suggestion that Matthew wrote in Hebrew prove that Matthew penned the first Gospel, which has only existed in Greek? Irenæus, too, flatly contradicts the Gospels by declaring that the ministry of Jesus extended over ten years and that Jesus lived to be fifty years of age ("Against Heresies," Book II, cap. 22).

If the statement of Irenæus ("Against Heresies," Book III, cap. xi) that the fourth Gospel was written to refute the errors of Cerinthus and Nicolaus, have any value, then the actual date of issue of the fourth Gospel will be considerably after the others. Dr. Tischendorf's statement that Polycarp has borne testimony to the Gospel of John is not even supported by the quotation on which he relies. All that is said in the passage quoted (Eusebius, "Ecc. Hist.," Book V, cap. 20) is that Irenæus when he was a child heard Polycarp repeat from memory the discourses of John and others concerning Jesus. If the Gospels had existed in the time of Polycarp it would have been at least as easy to have read them from the MS as to repeat them from memory. Dr. Tischendorf might also have added that the letter to Florinus, whence he takes the passage on which he relies, exists only in the writings of Eusebius, to whom we are indebted for many pieces of Christian evidence since abandoned as forgeries. Dr. Tischendorf says: "Any testimony of Polycarp in favor of the Gospel refers us back to the Evangelist himself, for Polycarp, in speaking to Irenæus of this Gospel as the work of his master, St. John, must have learned from the lips of the apostle himself, whether he was its author or not." Now, what evidence is there that Polycarp ever said a single word as to the authorship of the fourth Gospel, or of any Gospel,

or that he even said that John had penned a single word? In the Epistle to the Philippians (the only writing attributed to Polycarp for which any genuine character is even pretended), the Gospel of John is never mentioned, nor is there even a single passage in the Epistle which can be identified with any passage in the Gospel of John.

Surely Dr. Tischendorf forgot, in the eager desire to make his witnesses bear good testimony, that the highest duty of an advocate is to make the truth clear, not to put forward a pleasantly colored falsehood to deceive the ignorant. It is not even true that Irenæus ever pretends that Polycarp in any way vouched our fourth Gospel as having been written by John, and yet Dr. Tischendorf had the cool audacity to say "there is nothing more damaging to the doubters of the authenticity of St. John's Gospel than this testimony of St. Polycarp." Do the Religious Tract Society regard English Infidels as so utterly ignorant that they thus intentionally seek to suggest a falsehood, or are the Council of the Religious Tract Society themselves unable to test the accuracy of the statements put forward on their behalf by the able decipherer of illegible parchments? It is too much to suspect the renowned Dr. Constantine Tischendorf of ignorance, yet even the coarse English sceptic regrets that the only other alternative will be to denounce him as a theological charlatan.

Dr. Mosheim, writing on behalf of Christianity, says that the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians is by some treated as genuine and by others as spurious, and that it is no easy matter to decide. Many critics, of no mean order, class it amongst the apostolic Christian forgeries, but whether the Epistle be genuine or spurious, it contains no quotation from, it makes no reference to, the Gospel of John.

To what is said of Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, it is enough to note that all these are after A.D. 150. Irenæus may be put 177 to 200, Tertullian about 193, and Clement of Alexandria as commencing the third century.

One of Dr. Tischendorf's most audacious flourishes is that (p. 49) with reference to the Canon of Muratori, which we are told "enumerates the books of the New Testament which, from the first, were considered canonical and sacred," and which "was written a little after the age of Pius I, about A.D. 170."

First the anonymous fragment contains books which were never accepted as canonical; next, it is quite impossible to say when or by whom it was written or what was its original language. Muratori, who discovered the fragment in 1740, conjectured that it was written about the end of the second or beginning of the third century, but it is noteworthy that neither Eusebius nor any other of the ecclesiastical advocates of the third, fourth, or fifth centuries,

ever refers to it. It may be the compilation of any monk at any date prior to 1740, and is utterly valueless as evidence.

Dr. Tischendorf's style is well exemplified by the positive manner in which he fixes the date A.D. 139 to the first apology of Justin, although a critic so "learned" as the unrivalled Dr. Tischendorf could not fail to be aware that more than one writer has supported the view that the date of the first apology was not earlier than A.D. 145, and others have contended for A.D. 150. The Benedictine editors of Justin's works support the latter date. Dr. Kenn argues for A.D. 155-160. On page 63, the Religious Tract Society's champion appeals to the testimony of Justin Martyr, but in order not to shock the devout while convincing the profane, he omits to mention that more than half the writings once attributed to Justin Martyr are now abandoned, as either of doubtful character or actual forgeries, and that Justin's value as a witness is considerably weakened by the fact that he quotes the acts of Pilate and the Sybilline Oracles as though they were reliable evidence, when in fact they are both admitted specimens of "a Christian forgery." But what does Justin testify as to the Gospels? Does he say that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were their writers? On the contrary, not only do the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John never occur as Evangelists in the writings of Justin, but he actually mentions facts and sayings as to Jesus, which are not found in either of the four Gospels. The very words rendered Gospels only occur where they are strongly suspected to be interpolated, Justin usually speaking of some writings which he calls "memorials" or "memoirs of the Apostles."

Dr. Tischendorf urges that in the writings of Justin the Gospels are placed side by side with the prophets, and that "this undoubtedly places the Gospels in the list of canonical books." If this means that there is any statement in Justin capable of being so construed, then Dr. Tischendorf was untruthful. Justin does quote specifically the Sybilline oracles, but never Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. He quotes statements as to Jesus, which may be found in the apocryphal Gospels, and which are not found in ours, so that if the evidence of Justin Martyr be taken, it certainly does not tend to prove, even in the smallest degree, that four Gospels were specially regarded with reverence in his day. The Rev. W. Sanday thinks that Justin did not assign an exclusive authority to our Gospels, and that he made use also of other documents no longer extant ("Gospels in 2nd Century," p. 117).

On p. 94 it is stated that "as early as the time of Justin the expression 'the Evangel' was applied to the four Gospels." This statement by Dr. Tischendorf and its publication by the Religious Tract Society call for the strongest condemnation. Nowhere in the writings of Justin are the words "the Evangel" applied to the four Gospels.

Lardner only professes to discover two instances in which the word anglicised by Tischendorf as “Evangel,” occurs; *εὐαγγελίω* and *εὐαγγελία*, the second being expressly pointed out by Schleiermacher as an interpolation, and as an instance in which a marginal note has been incorporated with the text; nor would one occurrence of such a word prove that any book or books were so known by Justin, as the word is merely a compound of *εὖ* good and *αγγελία* message; nor is there the slightest foundation for the statement that in the time of Justin the word Evangel was ever applied to designate the four Gospels now attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Dr. Tischendorf (p. 46) admits that the “faith of the Church . . . would be seriously compromised” if we do not find references to the Gospels in writings between A.D. 100 and A.D. 150; and — while he does not directly assert — he insinuates that in such writings the Gospels were “treated with the greatest respect,” or “even already treated as canonical and sacred writings;” and he distinctly affirms that the Gospels “did see the light” during the “Apostolic age,” “and before the middle of the second” century our Gospels were held in the highest respect by the Church,” although for the affirmation, he neither has nor advances the shadow of evidence.

The phrases, “Apostolic age” and “Apostolic fathers” denote the first century of the Christian era, and those fathers who are supposed to have flourished during that period, and who are supposed to have seen or heard, or had the opportunity of seeing or hearing, either Jesus or some one or more of the twelve Apostles. Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, are those whose names figure most familiarly in Christian evidences as Apostolic fathers. But the evidence from these Apostolic fathers is of a most unreliable character. Mosheim (“Ecclesiastical History,” cent. 1, cap. 2, sec. 3, 17) says that “the Apostolic history is loaded with doubts, fables, and difficulties,” and that not long after Christ’s ascension several histories were current of his life and doctrines, full of “pious frauds and fabulous wonders.” Amongst these were “The Acts of Paul,” “The Revelation of Peter,” “The Gospel of Peter,” “The Gospel of Andrew,” “The Gospel of John,” “The Gospel of James,” “The Gospel of the Egyptians,” etc. The attempts often made to prove from the writings of Barnabas, Ignatius, etc., the prior existence of the four Gospels, though specifically unnamed, by similarity of phraseology in quotations, is a failure, even admitting for the moment the genuineness of the Apostolic Scriptures, if the proof is intended to carry the matter higher than that such and such statements were current in some form or other, at the date the fathers wrote. As good an argument might be made that some of the Gospel

passages were adopted from the fathers. The fathers occasionally quote, as from the mouth of Jesus, words which are not found in any of our four Gospels, and make reference to events not included in the Gospel narratives, clearly evidencing that even if the four documents ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were in existence, they were not the only sources of information from which some of the Apostolic fathers derived their knowledge of Christianity, and evidencing also that the four Gospels had attained no such specific superiority as to entitle them to special mention by name.

Of the epistle attributed to Barnabas, which is supposed by its supporters to have been written in the latter part of the first century, which, Paley says, is probably genuine, which is classed by Eusebius as spurious ("Ecclesiastical History," book iii, cap. 25), and which Dr. Donaldson does not hesitate for one moment in refusing to ascribe to Barnabas the Apostle ("Ante-Nicene Fathers," vol. i, p. 100), it is only necessary to say that so far from speaking of the Gospels with the greatest respect, it does not mention by name any one of the four Gospels. There are some passages in Barnabas which are nearly identical in phraseology with some Gospel passages, and which it has been argued are quotations from one or other of the four Gospels, but which may equally be quotations from other Gospels, or from writings not in the character of Gospels. There are also passages which are nearly identical with several of the New Testament epistles, but even the great framer of Christian evidences, Lardner, declares his conviction that none of these last-mentioned passages are quotations, or even allusions, to the Pauline or other epistolary writings. Barnabas makes many quotations which clearly demonstrate that the four Gospels, if then in existence and if he had access to them, could not have been his only source of information as to the teachings of Jesus (*e.g.* cap. 7). "The Lord enjoined that whosoever did not keep the fast should be put to death." "He required the goats to be of goodly aspect and similar, that when they see him coming they may be amazed by the likeness to the goat." Says he, "those who wish to behold me and lay hold of my kingdom, must through tribulation and suffering obtain me" (cap. 12). And the Lord saith, "When a tree shall be bent down and again rise, and when blood shall flow out of the wound." Will the Religious Tract Society point out from which of the Gospels these are quoted?

Barnabas (cap. 10) says that Moses forbade the Jews to eat weasel flesh, "because that animal conceives with the mouth," and forbade them to eat the hyena because that animal annually changes its sex. This father seems to have made a sort of *mélange* of some of the Pentateuchal ordinances. He says (cap. 8) that the Heifer (mentioned in Numbers) was a type of Jesus, that the *three* (?) young men appointed to sprinkle, denote Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob, that *wool was put upon a stick* because the kingdom of Jesus was founded upon the cross, and (cap. 9) that the 318 men *circumcised* by Abraham stood for Jesus crucified. Barnabas also declared that the world was to come to an end in 6,000 years ("Freethinker's Text-Book," part ii, p. 268). In the Sinaitic Bible, the Epistle of St. Barnabas has now, happily for misguided Christians, been discovered in the original Greek. To quote the inimitable style of Dr. Tischendorf, "while so much has been lost in the course of centuries by the tooth of time and the carelessness of ignorant monks, an invisible eye had watched over this treasure, and when it was on the point of perishing in the fire, the Lord had decreed its deliverance;" "while critics have generally been divided between assigning it to the first or second decade of the second century, the Sinaitic Bible, which has for the first time cleared up this question, has led us to throw its composition as far back as the last decade of the first century." A fine specimen of Christian evidence writing, cool assertion without a particle of proof and without the slightest reason given. How does the Sinaitic MS, even if it be genuine, clear up the question of the date of St. Barnabas's Epistle? Dr. Tischendorf does not condescend to tell us what has led the Christian advocate to throw back the date of its composition? We are left entirely in the dark: in fact, what Dr. Tischendorf calls a "throw back," is if you look at Lardner just the reverse. What does the epistle of Barnabas prove, even if it be genuine? Barnabas quotes, by name, Moses and Daniel, but never Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Barnabas specifically refers to Deuteronomy and the prophets, but never to either of the four Gospels.

There is an epistle attributed to Clement of Rome, which has been preserved in a single MS only where it is coupled with another epistle rejected as spurious. Dr. Donaldson ("Ante-Nicene Fathers," vol. i, p. 3) declares that who the Clement was to whom these writings are ascribed cannot with absolute certainty be determined. Both epistles stand on equal authority; one is rejected by Christians, the other is received. In this epistle while there is a distinct reference to an Epistle by Paul to the Corinthians, there is no mention by name of the four Gospels, nor do any of the words attributed by Clement to Jesus agree for any complete quotation with anyone of the Gospels as we have them. The Rev. W. Sanday is frank enough to concede "that Clement is not quoting directly from our Gospels."

Is it probable that Clement would have mentioned a writing by Paul, and yet have entirely ignored the four Gospels, if he had known that they had then existed? And could they have easily existed in the Christian world in his day without his knowledge? If anyone takes cap. xxv of this epistle and sees the phoenix given as a historic fact, and as evidence for the reality of the resurrection,

he will be better able to appreciate the value of this so-called epistle of Clement.

The letters of Ignatius referred to by Dr. Tischendorf are regarded by Mosheim as laboring under many difficulties, and embarrassed with much obscurity. Even Lardner, doing his best for such evidences, says, that if we find matters in the Epistles inconsistent with the notion that Ignatius was the writer, it is better to regard such passages as interpolations, than to reject the Epistles entirely, especially in the "scarcity" of such testimonies.

There are fifteen epistles of which eight are undisputedly forgeries. Of the remaining seven there are two versions, a long and a short version, one of which must be corrupt, both of which may be. These seven epistles, however, are in no case to be accepted with certainty as those of Ignatius. Dr. Cureton contends that only three still shorter epistles are genuine ("Ante-Nicene Fathers," vol. i, pp. 137 to 143). The Rev. W. Sanday treats the three short ones as probably genuine, waiving the question as to the others ("Gospels in Second Century," p. 77, and see preface to sixth edition "Supernatural Religion"). Ignatius, however, even if he be the writer of the epistles attributed to him, never mentions either of the four Gospels. In the nineteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, there is a statement made as to the birth and death of Jesus, not to be found in either Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

If the testimony of the Ignatian Epistles is reliable, then it vouches that in that early age there were actually Christians who denied the death of Jesus. A statement as to Mary in cap. nineteen of the Epistle to the Ephesians is not to be found in any portion of the Gospels. In his Epistle to the Trallians, Ignatius, attacking those who denied the real existence of Jesus, would have surely been glad to quote the evidence of eye witnesses like Matthew and John, if such evidence had existed in his day. In cap. eight of the Epistles to the Philadelphians, Ignatius says, "I have heard of some who say: Unless I find it in the archives I will not believe the Gospel. And when I said it is written, they answered that remains to be proved." This is the most distinct reference to any Christian writings, and how little does this support Dr. Tischendorf's position. From which of our four Gospels could Ignatius have taken the words, "I am not an incorporeal demon," which he puts into the mouth of Jesus in cap. iii, the epistle to the Smyrnæans? Dr. Tischendorf does admit that the evidence of the Ignatian Epistles is not of decisive value; might he not go farther and say, that as proof of the four Gospels it is of no value at all?

On page 70, Dr. Tischendorf quotes Hippolytus without any qualification. Surely the English Religious Tract Society might have remembered that Dodwell says, that the name of Hippolytus had been so abused by impostors, that it was not easy to distinguish any of his writings. That Mill declares that, with one ex-

ception, the pieces extant under his name are all spurious. That, except fragments in the writings of opponents, the works of Hippolytus are entirely lost. Yet the Religious Tract Society permit testimony so tainted to be put forward under their authority, to prove the truth of Christian history. The very work which Dr. Tischendorf pretends to quote is not even mentioned by Eusebius, in the list he gives of the writings of Hippolytus.

On page 94, Dr. Tischendorf states that Basilides, before A.D. 138, and Valentinus, about A.D. 140, make use of three out of four Gospels, the first using John and Luke, the second, Matthew, Luke, and John. What words of either Basilides or Valentinus exist anywhere to justify this reckless assertion? Was Dr. Tischendorf again presuming on the utter ignorance of those who are likely to read his pamphlet? The Religious Tract Society are responsible for Dr. Tischendorf's allegations, which it is impossible to support with evidence.

The issue raised is not whether the followers of Basilides or the followers of Valentinus may have used these gospels, but whether there is a particle of evidence to justify Dr. Tischendorf's declaration, that Basilides and Valentinus themselves used the above-named gospels. That the four Gospels were well known during the second half of the first century is what Dr. Tischendorf undertook to prove, and statements attributed to Basilides and Valentinus, but which ought to be attributed to their followers, will go but little way as such proof (see "Supernatural Religion," vol. ii, pp. 41 to 63).

It is pleasant to find a grain of wheat in the bushel of Tischendorf chaff. On page 98, and following pages, the erudite author applies himself to get rid of the testimony of Papias, which was falsified and put forward by Paley as of great importance. Paley says the authority of Papias is complete; Tischendorf declares that Papias is in error. Paley says Papias was a hearer of John, Tischendorf says he was not. We leave the champions of the two great Christian evidence-mongers to settle the matter as best they can. If, however, we are to accept Dr. Tischendorf's declaration that the testimony of Papias is worthless, we get rid of the chief link between Justin Martyr and the apostolic age. It pleases Dr. Tischendorf to damage Papias, because that father is silent as to the gospel of John; but the Religious Tract Society must not forget that in thus clearing away the second-hand evidence of Papias, they have cut away their only pretence for saying that any of the Gospels are mentioned by name within 150 years of the date claimed for the birth of Jesus. In referring to the lost work of Theophilus of Antioch, which Dr. Tischendorf tells us was a kind of harmony of the Gospels, in which the four narratives are moulded and fused into one, the learned Doctor forgets to tell us that Jerome, whom he quotes as giving some account of

Theophilus, actually doubted whether the so-called commentary was really from the pen of that writer. Lardner says: "Whether those commentaries which St. Jerome quotes were really composed by Theophilus may be doubted, since they were unknown to Eusebius, and were observed by Jerome to differ in style and expression from his other works. However, if they were not his, they were the work of some anonymous ancient." But if they were the work of an anonymous ancient after Eusebius, what becomes of Dr. Tischendorf's "as early as A.D. 170?"

Eusebius, who refers to Theophilus, and who speaks of his using the Apocalypse, would have certainly gladly quoted the Bishop of Antioch's "Commentary on the Four Gospels," if it had existed in his day. Nor is it true that the references we have in Jerome to the work attributed to Theophilus, justify the description given by Dr. Tischendorf, or even the phrase of Jerome, "*qui quatuor Evangelistarum in unum opus dicta compingens.*" Theophilus seems, so far as it is possible to judge, to have occupied himself not with a connected history of Jesus, or a continuous discourse as to his doctrines, but rather with mystical and allegorical elucidations of occasional passages, which ended, like many pious commentaries on the Old or New Testament, in leaving the point dealt with a little less clear with the Theophillian commentary than without it. Dr. Tischendorf says that Theodoret and Eusebius speak of Tatian in the same way — that is, as though he had, like his Syrian contemporary, composed a harmony of the four Gospels. This is also inaccurate. Eusebius talks of Tatianus "having found a certain body and collection of Gospels, I know not how," which collection Eusebius does not appear even to have ever seen; and so far from the phrase in Theodoret justifying Dr. Tischendorf's explanation, it would appear from Theodoret that Tatian's Diatessaron was, in fact, a sort of spurious gospel, "The Gospel of the Four" differing materially from our four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Neither Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, or Jerome, who refer to other works of Tatian, make any mention of this. Dr. Tischendorf might have added that Diapente, or "the Gospel of the Five," has also been a title applied to this work of Tatian.

In the third chapter of his essay, Dr. Tischendorf refers to apocryphal writings "which bear on their front the names of Apostles" "used by obscure writers to palm off" their forgeries. Dr. Tischendorf says that these spurious books were composed "partly to embellish" scripture narratives, and "partly to support false doctrine;" and he states that in early times, the Church was not so well able to distinguish true gospels from false ones, and that consequently some of the apocryphal writings "were given a place they did not deserve." This statement of the inability of the Church to judge correctly, tells as much against the whole, as

against any one or more of the early Christian writings, and as it may be as fatal to the now received gospels as to those now rejected, it deserves the most careful consideration. According to Dr. Tischendorf, Justin Martyr falls into the category of those of the Church who were “not so critical in distinguishing the true from the false;” for Justin, says Tischendorf, treats the Gospel of St. James and the Acts of Pilate, each as a fit source whence to derive materials for the life of Jesus, and therefore must have regarded the Gospel of St. James and the Acts of Pilate, as genuine and authentic writings; while Dr. Tischendorf, wiser, and a greater critic than Justin, condemns the Gospel of St. James as spurious, and calls the Acts of Pilate “a pious fraud;” but if Dr. Tischendorf be correct in his statement that “Justin made use of this Gospel” and quotes the “Acts of Pontius Pilate,” then, according to his own words, Justin did not know how to distinguish the true from the false, and the whole force of his evidence previously used by Dr. Tischendorf in aid of the four Gospels would have been seriously diminished, even if it had been true, which it is not, that Justin Martyr had borne any testimony on the subject.

Such, then, are the weapons, say the Religious Tract Society, by their champion, “which we employ against unbelieving criticism.” And what are these weapons? We have shown in the preceding pages, the *suppressio veri* and the *suggestio falsi* are amongst the weapons used. The Religious Tract Society directors are parties to fabrication of evidence, and they permit a learned charlatan to forward the cause of Christ with craft and chicanery. But even this is not enough; they need, according to their pamphlet, “a new weapon;” they want “to find out the very words the Apostles used.” True believers have been in a state of delusion; they were credulous enough to fancy that the authorised version of the Scriptures tolerably faithfully represented God’s revelation to humankind. But no, says Dr. Tischendorf, it has been so seriously modified in the copying and re-copying that it ought to be set aside altogether, and a fresh text constructed. Glorious news this for the Bible Society. Listen to it, Exeter Hall! Glad tidings to be issued by the Paternoster Row saints! After spending hundreds of thousands of pounds in giving away Bibles to soldiers, in placing them in hotels and lodging-houses, and shipping them off to negroes and savages, it appears that the wrong text has been sent through the world, the true version being all the time in a waste-paper heap at Mount Sinai, watched over by an “invisible eye.” But, adds Dr. Tischendorf, “if you ask me whether any popular version contains the original text, my answer is Yes and No. I say Yes as far as concerns your soul’s salvation.” If these are enough for the soul’s salvation, why try to improve the matter? If we really need the “full and clear light” of the Sinaitic Bible to show us

“what is the Word written by God,” then most certainly our present Bible is not believed by the Religious Tract Society to be the Word written by God. The Christian advocates are in this dilemma: either the received text is insufficient, or the proposed improvement is unnecessary. Dr. Tischendorf says that “The Gospels, like the only begotten of the Father, will endure as long as human nature itself,” yet he says “there is a great diversity among the texts,” and that the Gospel in use amongst the Ebionites and that used amongst the Nazarenes have been “disfigured here and there with certain arbitrary changes.” He admits, moreover, that “in early times, when the Church was not so critical in distinguishing the true from the false,” spurious Gospels obtained a credit which they did not deserve. And while arguing for the enduring character of the Gospel, he requests you to set aside the received text altogether, and to try to construct a new revelation by the aid of Dr. Tischendorf’s patent Sinaitic invention.

We congratulate the Religious Tract Society upon their manifesto, and on the victory it secures them over German Rationalism and English Infidelity. The Society’s translator, in his introductory remarks, declares that “circumstantial evidence when complete, and when every link in the chain has been thoroughly tested, is as strong as direct testimony;” and, adds the Society’s penman, “This is the kind of evidence which Dr. Tischendorf brings for the genuineness of our Gospels.” It would be difficult to imagine a more inaccurate description of Dr. Tischendorf’s work. Do we find the circumstantial evidence carefully tested in the Doctor’s boasting and curious narrative of his journeys commenced on a pecuniary deficiency and culminating in much cash? Do we find it in Dr. Tischendorf’s concealment for fifteen years of the place, watched over by an invisible eye, in which was hidden the greatest biblical treasure in the world? Is the circumstantial evidence shown in the sneers at Renan? or is each link in the chain tested by the strange jumbling together of names and conjectures in the first chapter? What tests are used in the cases of Valentinus and Basilides in the second chapter? How is the circumstantial testimony aided by the references in the third chapter to the Apocryphal Gospels? Is there a pretence even of critical testing in the chapter devoted to the apostolic fathers? All that Dr. Tischendorf has done is in effect to declare that our authorised version of the New Testament is so unreliable, that it ought to be got rid of altogether, and a new text constructed. And this declaration is circulated by the Religious Tract Society, which sends the sixpenny edition of the Gospel with one hand, and in the other the shilling Tischendorf pamphlet, declaring that many passages of the Religious Tract Society’s New Testament have undergone such serious modifications of meaning as to leave us in painful uncertainty as to what was originally written.

The very latest contribution from orthodox sources to the study of the Gospels, as contained in the authorised version, is to be found in the very candid preface to the recently-issued revised version of the New Testament, where the ordinary Bible receives a condemnation of the most sweeping description. Here, on the high authority of the revisers, we are told that, with regard to the Greek text, the translators of the authorised version had for their guides “manuscripts of late date, few in number and used with little critical skill.” The revisers add what Freethinkers have long maintained, and have been denounced from pulpits for maintaining, viz., “that the commonly received text needed thorough revision,” and, what is even more important, they candidly avow that “it is but recently that materials have been acquired for executing such a work with even approximate completeness.” So that not only “God’s Word” has admittedly for generations not been “God’s Word” at all, but even now, and with materials not formerly known, it has only been revised with “approximate completeness,” whatever those two words may mean. If they have any significance at all, they must convey the belief of the new and at present final revisers of the Gospel, that, even after all their toil, they are not quite sure that god’s revelation is quite exactly rendered into English. So far as the ordinary authorised version of the New Testament goes — and it is this, the law-recognised version which is still used in administering oaths — we are told that the old translators “used considerable freedom,” and “studiously adopted a variety of expressions which would now be deemed hardly consistent with the requirements of faithful translation.” This is a pleasant euphemism, but a real and direct charge of dishonest translation by the authorised translators. The new revisers add, with sadness, that “it cannot be doubted that they (the translators of the authorised version) carried this liberty too far, and that the studied avoidance of uniformity in the rendering of the same words, even when occurring in the same context, is one of the blemishes of their work.” These blemishes the new revisers think were increased by the fact that the translation of the authorised version of the New Testament was assigned to two separate companies, who never sat together, which “was beyond doubt the cause of many inconsistencies,” and, although there was a final supervision, the new revisers add, most mournfully: “When it is remembered that the supervision was completed in nine months, we may wonder that the incongruities which remain are not more numerous.”

Nor are the revisers by any means free from doubt and mis-giving on their own work. They had the “laborious task” of “deciding between the rival claims of various readings which might properly affect the translation,” and, as they tell us, “Textual criticism, as applied to the Greek New Testament, forms a special

study of much intricacy and difficulty, and even now leaves room for considerable variety of opinion among competent critics.” Next they say: “the frequent inconsistencies in the authorised version have caused us much embarrassment,” and that there are “numerous passages in the authorised version in which . . . the studied variety adopted by the Translators of 1611 has produced a degree of inconsistency that cannot be reconciled with the principle of faithfulness.” So little are the new revisers always certain as to what god means that they provide “alternative readings in difficult or debateable passages,” and say “the notes of this last group are numerous and largely in excess of those which were admitted by our predecessors.” And with reference to the pronouns and other words in italics we are told that “some of these cases . . . are of singular intricacy, and make it impossible to maintain rigid uniformity.” The new revisers conclude by declaring that “through our manifold experience of its abounding difficulties we have felt more and more as we went onward that such a work can never be accomplished by organised efforts of scholarship and criticism unless assisted by divine help.” Apparently the new revisers are conscious that they did not receive this divine help in their attempt at revision, for they go on: “We know full well that defects must have their place in a work so long and so arduous as this which has now come to an end. Blemishes and imperfections there are in the noble translation which we have been called upon to revise; blemishes and imperfections will assuredly be found in our own revision . . . we cannot forget how often we have failed in expressing some finer shade of meaning which we recognised in the original, how often idiom has stood in the way of a perfect rendering, and how often the attempt to preserve a familiar form of words, or even a familiar cadence, has only added another perplexity to those which have already beset us.”

THE END.