

THE  
**NINETIETH ORATION**

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

*Christian Evidence Society,*

IN THEIR

**Areopagus,**

86, CANNON STREET, LONDON,

**TUESDAY, JANUARY the 23rd, 1827;**

BEING

**A Refutation of Dr. Chalmers's Evidence and Authority of the  
Christian Revelation, Chapter III,  
Forming a Part of the Article "*Christianity*," in the  
Edinburgh Encyclopædia.**

BY

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THE  
NINETIETH ORATION,

&c. &c.

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*Mr. Chairman, Members of the Christian  
Evidence Society, Ladies and Gentle-  
men ;*

1. IN the matter which has now been read, the argument propounds to shew “INTERNAL MARKS OF TRUTH AND HONESTY TO BE FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT;” and as a part of this argument, the reverend and learned arguist lays down some of the various marks of craft and falsehood which are NOT to be found in it.

2. Now the very proposition of such an argument, in either of these branches of it, supposes a duty in believers, as well as a right in unbelievers, to sift this question with the utmost severity of criticism.

3. If there are such marks of truth and honesty in the New Testament, our sifting and our criticism will discover them---will set them in a more conspicuous light, and cause them to shine with a brighter effulgence : but if there are therein the contrary indications of imposture and falsehood, in the name of all that is honourable and just among men, I ask, wherefore should we blink or conceal them? Must we, for piety's or religion's sake, tamper with a suspected imposture, and sell our honour to a compromise with fraud? In the language which belief itself has consecrated, I ask, " Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him?" Job xiii. 7.

4. In entering upon this important and infinitely consequential investigation, an investigation in which every person in this assembly is, or ought to be, equally interested and equally affected, I have only to entreat you to do yourselves the justice to put from your minds the prejudices which persons who have themselves seldom or never attended these discussions have found it convenient to disseminate, in order to discourage the attendance of others ; as if nothing like sober argumentation, calm reasoning, sound learning,

and accurate criticism, were to be encountered in this Areopagus. Hear and judge; and judging fairly, if any thing I offer seem less true to you than it does to me, judge and condemn me too; but only hear that you may judge, and judge only on what you hear.

5. But this, at least, may be common ground between us. I ask no more, than that you grant me that the Good Eternal God of Truth (and never have I invoked that name with levity or lightness) cannot be the author of forgery and fraud. Whatever may be the perversities or delusions of the human heart—to whatever extent wicked and deceitful men may have imposed upon others—or weak and ignorant men been willing to be imposed on, to Him, at least, be it our mind that we should ascribe “no variableness nor shadow of turning.”

6. Now, then, to this great business; and as the Rev. Dr. Chalmers, in this his Treatise “on the Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation,” has propounded to us that we should try the writings of the New Testament upon the same principles of calm and indifferent criticism which we should apply to any other writings, proceed we upon this

simple schedule of the whole argument now before us, i. e. "*Internal marks of truth and honesty to be found in the New Testament ; and some of the various marks of craft and falsehood which are not to be found in it.*"

And is it possible that any person in this assembly can shut out from his mind the irresistible conviction, that, even if there were all these marks of truth and honesty which our author has supposed there to be found, and none of those marks of craft and falsehood there to be found, the writings in question might yet be most gross and palpable forgeries; all that Dr. Chalmers, or any one else, could shew for them in that way notwithstanding.

7. For where was there a forgery in all the world that had not internal marks of truth and honesty? or, what does a forgery consist in, but in the predicament of exhibiting marks of truth and honesty, where truth and honesty ARE NOT, and not exhibiting marks of craft and falsehood, where craft and falsehood ARE?

8. Nor is it enough to prove the authenticity of any important document, to shew that it HAS ten, or ten thousand, marks of in-

tegrity, while there can be shewn one single mark of integrity that it has not; or to plead that there are as many marks of imposture which it has NOT GOT, while there is one that it HAS. That one may be as insignificant as you please, a mere slip of the pen, an iota, a scratch, a dot, but it will do the business; the single leak in your vessel, for all her keel of copper and ribs of oak, is fatal to your argosy's insurance. Who would listen to your ten thousand ingenious arguments to shew your shining sovereign to be a good one, who had once heard the tell-tale sound in the ringing of it that said DUMP?

9. But hear our author. "Under this head," he observes (that is, under the head of "marks of truth and honesty,") "it may be right to insist upon the MINUTE ACCURACY which runs through all its allusions to the existing manners and circumstances of the times," (p. 71.) Now suppose there were such *minute accuracy* of allusion to manners and circumstances, it would only put the Gospel on a level with Sir Walter Scott's poems, or Mrs. Ratcliff's romances, in which there is a like accuracy of allusion to existing manners and circumstances, and most minute descriptions of scenes and times in which the plot is sup-

posed to be laid. The Romance of the Forest, the Tale of Flodden Field, must bring our imagination to some references to the *when* and *where* the transactions of the scene are supposed to have taken place. You could not describe a scene without them, if you were to try at it. The Christmas pantomime, the history of the Man in the Moon, is not put together without such a congruity of allusion to existing manners and circumstances.

10. But to tell us, that the allusions to the existing manners and circumstances of the times, contained in the New Testament, are "*minutely* accurate," is to play desperate, to out-herod Herod; to fling defiance in the face of fact, and to launch the most caustic jibe and biting sarcasm against the New Testament.

11. What would be said of a counsellor, who should stand up in a court of justice to maintain the MINUTE ACCURACY of writings for which he would be obliged to answer all that Dr. Chalmers can answer for the minute accuracy of the New Testament?

"WHEN did these minutely accurate writings make their first appearance?"

"Oh, my lord, they have no date, only we



know that they must have appeared at or about some time or other.

"Very well. **WHERE**, then, did these minutely accurate writings make their first appearance?

"Why," says Dr. Chalmers himself, "they made their first appearance in different parts of the world," p. 57. That is, some, I suppose, in Egypt, some in the East Indies, some at Botany Bay, and some at York.

"By whom, then, were they written?

"O, my lord, that's being too minute---we don't know **BY** whom they were written, but we know that they were written **ACCORDING** to some persons, who, they tell us, were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

"Who, then, collected them into one volume?

"Grammatici certant et adhuc sub judice lis est. The opinions, or rather the conjectures, of the learned, says the learned Moshheim, are extremely various."

And for writings, whose authenticity is no better attested than thus, Dr. Chalmers would challenge the praise of minute accuracy.

12. "It is really" (says our author) "a most useful exercise to pursue the harmony which subsists between the writers of the

New Testament, and those Jewish and profane authors with whom we bring them into comparison," (p. 75) With all my heart: I'll pull my gloves off for this useful exercise, and will accept no seconding in it, but that of persons whom I suppose Dr. Chalmers himself must recognise as orthodox and real Christians, of talents as cultivated, of piety as ardent, and of learning as extensive as his own.

13. Well, then, in comparing the Evangelists with the Jewish historian, JOSEPHUS, our author tell us, that "we have every reason to believe that *he* was a most zealous and determined enemy to the cause," (p. 75.) And if he was so zealous and determined an enemy to the cause, what must we think of the possibility of his having been the author of the celebrated third section, which is found in the third chapter of the eighteenth book of his Jewish Antiquities, and which I repeat to you, in demonstration of the sincerity of labour which I have expended in this great argument, that there should be nothing which could be known by man, touching the evidence of the Christian religion, unknown by me: that if there were but the iota of a presumption in its favour, in the height, thence would I pluck it down: in the depth---thence.

would I dig it up : that if there were a single reason for being a Christian, in all the world, I would possess myself of it ; and to come by it,

“ Flectere si neque superos, Acheronta movebo,”

“ If I could not move Heaven, I’d raise all hell.”

#### 14. This it is:---

ΓΙΝΕΤΑΙ ΔΕ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΕΤΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΧΡΟΝΟΝ, ΙΗΣΗΣ ΣΟΦΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ ΕΙΓΕ ΑΝΔΡΑ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΛΕΧΕΙΝ ΧΡΗ, ΗΝ ΓΑΡ ΠΑΡΑΔΟΞΩΝ ΕΡΓΩΝ ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ, ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΟΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΗΔΟΝΗ Τ’ ΑΛΗΘΗ ΔΕΧΟΜΕΝΩΝ : ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΛΗΣ ΜΕΝ ΕΔΑΙΣ, ΠΟΛΛΗΣ ΔΕ ΤΕ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΕΠΗΓΑΓΕΤΟ. Ο ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΕΤΟΣ ΗΝ, ΚΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΕΝΔΕΙΞΕΙ ΤΩΝ ΠΡΩΤΩΝ ΑΝΔΡΩΝ ΠΑΡ ΗΜΙΝ, ΣΤΑΥΡΩ ΕΠΙΤΕΤΙΜΗΚΟΤΟΣ ΠΙΛΑΤΟΥΣ ΕΚ ΕΚΑΥΣΑΝΤΟ ΟΙΓΕ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΑΓΑΠΗΣΑΝΤΕΣ, ΕΦΑΝΗ ΓΑΡ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΤΡΙΤΗΝ ΕΧΩΝ ΗΜΕΡΑΝ ΚΑΛΙΝ ΖΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΘΕΙΩΝ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΩΝ ΤΑΥΤΑΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΑΛΛΑ ΜΥΡΙΑ ΘΑΥΜΑΣΙΑ ΠΕΡΙ ΑΥΤΗΣ ΕΙΡΗΚΟΤΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΕΤΙ ΝΥΝ, ΤΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΣΔΕ ΝΟΜΑΣΜΕΝΩ, ΕΚ ΕΚΕΛΙΠΕ ΤΟ ΦΥΛΟΝ.

15. Of which, in English, this is the purport : “ There existed, about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it be fitting to call him a man, for he was a performer of extraordinary works, a teacher of such as receive the truth with pleasure ; and indeed he led many Jews, and many also of the Grecian (race). This was the Christ, and it will shew him (to

be so,) that when he had been punished on the Cross, by Pilate and the chief men among us, those who had before been attached to him continued, to be so, for he appeared to them again alive the third day; the holy prophets having foretold these things, and ten thousand other wonders concerning him. The stock of Christians, as named from him, has not even yet failed from among us."

16. If this passage be a forgery, Josephus might indeed have been an enemy to Christianity---AS I AM. If it be genuine, I ask, how could Christianity have had a better friend?

17. But what sort of a friend to Christianity you will take Dr. Chalmers himself to be, I leave you to judge, from this very short list of the *modes of expression* which seem inadvertently to drop from his pen when it is Christianity he is describing. He calls it "the tenderest prepossession of infancy,"---"the peculiar delusion,"---"the spell which holds the understanding,"---"the infection of piety," &c. &c. a sort of phrases which I urge not in argument against him, for

"I like this rocking of the battlements,

"It suits the especial habit of my soul:"

but when they occur so frequently as they do in the course of this treatise, they will not suffer our suspicion to sleep, without dreaming at least, that the language of the Professor of the Colleges of St. Salvador, St. Leonard, and St. Andrew does not exactly convey the sentiments of Thomas Chalmers; nor would you put *him* down among your flatterers, who should be looking out for so many names for you, rather than call you "Honest."

18. On the 77th page, however, of this Treatise, our author makes amends for all, by the bold, and surely I may call it the *wicked* hardihood of asserting, that "in every page of the evangelical writers, there is evinced a minute, varied, and intimate acquaintance with the Statistics of Judea, such as to make the conclusion irresistible, that the authors were the eye-witnesses of their own history, or lived about the period of its accomplishment," p. 79.

19. Now, Gentlemen, such a representation of the matter is so far from being true, or an approach to truth, that to demonstration itself will I demonstrate, and with the highest authorities of learning that can be pretended in

all the learned world, will I sustain the demonstration, that,

1. The writers of the Gospels were never in Judea at all.

2. That they knew no more about the geography of the country, than you or I may do of the streets and allies in Constantinople.

3. That they were not Jews at all.

4. That they lived not in the same age.

5. That they were ignorant of the Hebrew language.

6. That they were no more related, and no nearer, to the hero of their fable, than I to Hercules. And if I fail of establishing your conviction on these points, through my own fault, let the name of an honest man belong to any body rather than to me.

20. That the authors of the four Gospels (whoever they were, God only knows) lived not at the time to which their Gospels refer, is apparent, from the fact of their relating events which we know did not happen till many years after that time. And though this can be got over, by the old fanatical trick of pretending that they wrote *prophetically*, and *foresaw* that those events would happen, yet a prophet would hardly be able to persuade us, that he had been an inhabitant of Lon-

don, if he should even *foresee* that St. Paul's Church was situate at Hyde Park Corner, or that the battle of Waterloo had been fought at Exeter 'Change.

21. Yet this is no caricature of Gospel statistics; for both Matthew and Mark have spoken of Christ as publishing his Gospel (Matthew iv. 25, Mark v. 20, and vii. 31) in Decapolis, and in the coasts of Decapolis, where no Decapolis existed; nor was the name itself in being till the latter end of the reign of Nero; nor did the evangelists so much as know what the name meant. (Evanson, page 137.)

22. But St. Matthew, in particular, is so minutely accurate in his STATISTICS, that (in ch. ii. v. 22) he informs us, that Joseph, notwithstanding being warned of God (which shews what little respect he had for God), turned aside into the parts of Galilee, because he heard that a son of Herod did reign in Judea, though it happened that a son of Herod at that time did reign in Galilee too, which shews as much minuteness and accuracy of statistical knowledge, as we should allow to an historian who should describe a man as taking lodgings in the Borough, in order to

retire from the dominions of the king of England.

23. In Matthew xix, Jesus is said to have "departed from Galilee into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan," when the Jordan itself was the eastern boundary of both the Jewish and Roman province of Judea, and consequently no part of Judea was beyond the Jordan, (Evanson, p. 169.) This is the minuteness and accuracy of a geographer, who should describe a man as departing from London into the coasts of England beyond the Irish Channel. Could such mistakes have been possible to a writer who had ever been an inhabitant of that country, or who knew any thing of its geography?

24. But you shall see now, that these writers were no Jews at all. Know ye not, Sirs, that there never was any thing so essentially characteristic of a Jew, as his national, his religious, his unconquerable abhorrence to pork? ---his God forbade it---his faith condemned it---his nature shuddered at it. The most glorious martyrs of their history were those who suffered the most cruel deaths rather than taste it. Cruden, in his note on the word, admits that they would not so much as



pronounce the name, and quotes the authority of Porphyry, that there were none in their country. Yet the word, with an impertinent familiarity, occurs thirteen times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It forms the favourite figure of speech in the mouth of Christ himself; and the most striking miracle that he ever wrought, was on the persons of a whole herd of swine, whom he sent galloping down the hill, as if the devil was in them, though the poor pigs had little reason to thank him for it; and the owners sent their compliments to him, and they'd be much obliged to him if he'd never come into their part of the world any more. Now, in the name of God, I ask, could it have been Jews who told the lie, in this latitude? Surely, if they had minded only to save appearances, they would have saved their bacon.

25. The Evangelist, St. John, as ignorant of the geography, the manners, and the language of Palestine, as Matthew, Mark, and Luke, has described John the Baptist as "baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there," John iii. 23; when "there was certainly no such place as Ænon, probably none such as Salim;" the writer apparently mistaking the Hebrew word עֵינַת which sig-

nifies waters or fountains, for the name of a city,\* a mistake only parallel to that of the child who pointed out the figures in a picture of the crucifixion:---“ That ugly man on the cross is Jesus Christ---that’s king Herod, that killed the poor children---that’s Pontius Pilate---and that fellow with the long pole in his hand is SUFFERY DUNDER.†

26. Yet in John i. 28, the Baptist is described as carrying on his joint-stock washing company in Bethany, beyond Jordan, where our English translators have fraudulently substituted the word *Bethabara*, to screen the geographical ignorance of the original impostor, who happened not to be aware, that there was no such place as Bethany beyond the Jordan; a fraud which the learned and accurate Griesbach has ingenuously corrected, by restoring the word Bethany to the text, to abide the censure of criticism.

27. But neither is there at Jerusalem, nor ever was there such a pool by the sheep-

\* Bretschneider, p. 96.

† From the creed, “ suffered under Pontius Pilate,” children are taught to say that they believe: it is known that they do not:—what is it, then, that they are taught, but to lie?

market as that of Bethesda, (John v.), whose waters were troubled by an angel descending to wash his dirty wings upon earth, for want of soap and water in Heaven, and thereby enduing the puddle with sanative qualities---a fiction adorned by Darwin, with poetry which would have graced a better argument:---

“ As erst an angel o’er Bethesda’s springs,  
Each morn descending, shook his dewy wings ;  
And as his bright translucent form he leaves,  
Salubrious powers enrich the troubled waves.”

28. No person who had ever been in Jerusalem---no person in the least acquainted with the Jewish history, or aware that it was an established article of the Jewish faith, that, since the last of their prophets, Malachi, there were no continued interpositions of miraculous agency in Israel, could possibly have related such an hi-diddle-diddle sort of a story, for which the best apology the most learned expositors could make, has been to expose it to the contempt it merits, by explaining, that this angel, after all, might have been nothing more than a butcher’s boy, who used to be sent down to the pond to wash such kind of delicacies as butchers’ boys are generally employed to wash.

29. From his gross ignorance of the Jewish

language, this Evangelist, *John*, has most posterously given us the passive participle *ἀπεσταλμένος*, *sent*, for a version of the Hebrew noun *תִּשְׁלַח* which signifies the places of the sending forth of water, that is, the *sluice*; and told us that this is by interpretation, *SENT*, as if the pool had been sent to the man, instead of the man being sent to the pool, as he was, for the purpose of washing his eyes, which was very necessary, after the filthy operation that had been performed on them; though to send a blind man to the water's edge, was putting him more in the way of baptism than in the way of salvation.

30. But the ignorance of the pretended Matthew of the Jewish language, an ignorance not merely of its vocabulary and of its grammar, if it ever had any, but of the grandest characteristic peculiarities of its idiom, such as are known to the readers of our English bibles, or of any thing that was ever translated out of their language, has betrayed him into an absurdity so monstrous and so ridiculous, as I dare not quote without pledge of your leave and allowance to do so. May I? May I? and shall it not be said, that I threw an additional air of ridicule on that which was

in itself, and in the most simple eneration of it, infinitely ridiculous?

31. Well, then, surely every one knows, that it was a regular idiom of the Jewish language to repeat the word on which it was wished to lay any peculiar emphasis, or to double it, by connecting it with a synonyme, expressive of precisely the same thing. This mode of language is well known to rhetoricians as the figure called a PLEONASM, and has considerable force and eloquence, even in other languages; as when we say in Latin, “*Moriens morietur*---Dying, he shall die;” that is to say, he shall be very dead---a very necessary distinction among Christians, who believe that a man could be dead, but not dead enough to stay dead. The Latin of the vulgate translation, “*Jure-jurando jurans juravi*---In swearing, swearing, I have sworn;” which is the way in which God swears: that is, as we should say, swearing with a vengeance.

32. Thus we read, that (Numbers xxiii. 24), “Behold the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift himself up as a young lion.” In the Psalms, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” and the son of man, that

thou regardest him?" And again, "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent," (Numbers xxiii. 19.) where, certainly, the great lion and the young, and the man and the son of man, meant only one lion and one man, that is to say, a good one of the sort.

33. But poor Matthew, not being aware of this, and stumbling upon some version of the fixth of the 9th of Zechariah, that ran, "Behold thy king cometh riding upon an ass, and on the son of an ass," supposed that these must needs be two Jerusalem ponies, and sets King Jesus, like Mr. Ducrow at Astley's theatre, astraddle across them both. (Matthew xxi.) No wonder, then, that his friends cut down branches of the trees to stop him; no wonder that the boys and girls raised the hue and cry!

"The dogs did bark, the children scream'd,  
Up went the windows all,  
And every soul cry'd out 'Well done!'  
As loud as he could bawl.

"Away went Jesus, who but he—  
His fame soon spread around;  
He carries weight—he rides a race—  
'Tis for a thousand pound."

So our fisherman beat the linen-draper bold.

34. Other instances of palpable ignorance, both of Jewish statistics, and of the Jewish history, demonstrating the points I have laid down, are such as that of John xi. 49, speaking of "Caiaphas being high priest that same year:" and again, "that being high priest that year, he prophesied,"---a mode of expression which no Jew, nor any one born in Palestine, could possibly have used ; there never having been an intelligent Jew who knew not that the High Priest held his office for life; and that of that office, prophecy was no part. (Bretschneider, 94.) Should we for a moment suppose an historian ever to have been in England who could write that George the Fourth was king this year ; and that being king, he gave sentence at the Old Bailey ?

35. John vii. 52. "Search and look," are the words which that writer puts into the mouth of a supposed ruler of the Jews, to whom he has given a Greek name---*Nicodemus*---for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet ;" when every Jew knows that their most illustrious prophets---their Nahum and their Jonah ---were both Galileans.

36. As for any pretended harmony, or consistency with themselves, in the exhibition of

one uniform and perfect character, I put in the clear judgement and cogent argumentation of the most learned Dr. Bretschneider, who in his *Probabilia* (now on the table—it is in the Latin tongue) seems to prove, that the Jesus of John's Gospel is a wholly different character from the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And Herbert Marsh, Bishop of Peterborough, has authenticated the opinion, that the three first Gospels are nothing more than translations, and very bad translations too, from some common Apocraphal Gospel which has been lost; Translation of Michaelis's Introduction, vol. 3, p. 2, p. 361. There are but four Gospels; our English divines admit that three of them are good for nothing; and our German divines admit that the fourth is absolutely good for nothing.

37. As for the minute and intimate comparison with the contemporary historians of that period, which our author has the wickedness to assert—for surely it is wickedness to lie so—that these writings are able to bear, what must we say of the famous passage in the 7th of Luke, that “there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed?” Have contemporary histo-



rians mentioned such a taxing? or could they have failed to mention it, if it had ever happened? I shield myself behind the answer of a divine, whose piety has never been questioned, whose learning has never been surpassed, whose labour in these researches has never been equalled.

38. There is no mention, by any Roman or Greek historian, or by any ancient author, of a decree in the reign of Augustus for taxing all the world, or the whole Roman empire. Judea was not at that time a Roman province, and there could not be any taxing made there by a decree of Augustus; and Cyrenius was not governor of Syria till nine or ten, perhaps twelve years after. (Lardner, vol. i. ch. 1, p. 175.

39. Of the pretended massacre of the children in Bethlehem, another fact, which, had it happened, could not possibly have escaped the notice of contemporary historians. Should we bring it to the comparison, which our author challenges, what must we think of his temerity? Again I take leave to hide myself behind the sevenfold shield of a Christian Ajax, and put in the admission of the pious and learned Evanson, p. 126 :

40. "Josephus and the Roman historians give us particular accounts of the character of this Jewish king (Herod), who received his sovereign authority from the Roman emperor; and inform us of other acts of cruelty which he was guilty of in his own family.---But of this infamous inhuman butchery, they are entirely silent. Under such circumstances, if my eternal happiness depended upon it, I could not believe it true. I am confident there is no Jew that reads this chapter, who does not laugh at the ignorant credulity of those professed Christians, who receive such gross palpable falsehoods for the inspired word of God, and lay the foundation of their religion upon such incredible fictions as these." There now! If I had said that, I should have been put down as a complete infidel.

41. But I must reserve innumerable other proofs, that crowd upon me with almost equal claims, in further demonstration of all I undertook to demonstrate, for my reply, or for future occasions.

Men and Brethren! If what I have now offered seem to you as convincing as it does to me, and I know not where nor with whom the power of conviction can be---if any thing

can be conceived more convincing---I earnestly commend this topic to the further prosecution of your own reflections.

43. My Christian brethren,---if there be any in this assembly who will answer to that name---witness for me, I beseech you, between your own consciences, and those whom you call the ministers of God's word, whether it be I or ~~they who~~ stand before you (judging from appearances only) with the greater appearance of sincerity and truth: they, if they be wrong, yet arrogating the infallibility of God himself, refusing to give an answer, and rendering it impossible that their wrong should be set right: I, if I be wrong, yet coming to the light, courting the means of further instruction, desiring to be refuted, and entreating to be answered.

44. Call on them, I beseech you, to find me a man, if there be one among them, who can convict any thing I have said of fallacy or error, that I may have the pleasure of correcting that error. But wrong not your own noble nature so grievously, nor so impiously dishonour the Author of nature, as to suppose he can possibly be the author of a religion, whose ministers and preachers shall

be found afraid and ashamed to come forward in its defence, where they are liable to encounter the opposition of one who is able, willing, and eager for the encounter; and who, plucking the wicked fable from all associations with the sacred name of the Almighty, would cast it to the earth, and exclaim, Great God of Truth! it is thus I worship thee. Let the man who believes in the book take it up! ~~Let the man who believes in the book take it up!~~

THE END.