

many writers here spoken of, undertook their labours. We have no reason to believe that any of them were actuated by unfriendly motives, but it is sufficiently plain from Luke's conduct, if not from his words, that these histories were unauthorized and unsatisfactory.

It has appeared to many, that the second verse is meant to express the manner in which these writers had prosecuted their enquiries, and written their histories;—that they had written their accounts, even as those delivered them unto them, who, from the beginning, were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word; I am inclined, however, to think that the second verse should be connected only with the *last* clause of the first; and that it respects the authority on which the great truths of Christianity were believed, without any reference to these writers. As if he had said—Forasmuch as many have undertaken to set forth in order, a declaration of those things, which are most surely *believed* among us, according to the faithful and well attested reports of those, which, from the beginning were eye-witnesses and also ministers of the word. That is, some eye-witnesses, as Mary and others. Others again were not only eye-witnesses, but apostles and ministers of the gospel.

At the commencement of the third verse, the apostle states his resolution, "It seemed good to me also to engage in the important work of writing a biography of Christ." With great good feeling, he abstains from throwing any positive blame on the many, who had engaged in this work before; from which we may infer, that they were well meaning men, who had done their best; but having no call to this work, and not being possessed of the requisite powers, their works were soon superseded by the authentic, and divinely inspired gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke; and then, in a few years, they sank

into oblivion. But though no blame is expressly attached to these men, in a quiet way their inadequacy is implied, when Luke states to his friend Theophilus that his object in writing the gospel, was that he might *know* the certainty of those things in which he had been instructed.

The Evangelist next proceeds to state the principle on which he had acted, in preparing his work. And first, he had diligently traced up every thing to the very source, or in other words, he had diligently investigated every thing from the very first. Not content with giving simply a life of Christ, he avails himself of every thing which could throw light upon it; and so commences his work most appropriately, with an account of the remarkable circumstance, which preceded the birth of John the Baptist, the Messiah's forerunner. In this respect, the gospel of Luke differs even from the inspired narratives of the other Evangelists. It is proper to observe that the word corresponding to,—"*from the very first*,"—may be translated *from above*, as if he had said,—having had perfect understanding of all things from above.—And so, some suppose that the apostle here indicates the divine inspiration which he enjoyed. "He had received his intelligence," says M. Henry, "not only by tradition, as others had done; but by revelation, confirming that tradition, and securing him from every error, or mistake, in the recording of it." There is no doubt that this is true, that Luke diligently exercised his own faculties, in collecting information from those who had been eye-witnesses of the events which he describes, and that the Holy Spirit effectually preserved him from all error; but as to whether this account is contained in the expression which we are considering, is a matter that may be doubted.

He resolved to give a distinct, orderly, account of the events in the life of