

in discovering them. Such an inference, therefore, from an important saying though not obvious to every reader, would at once strike them favorably, and commend itself to their approval. It was like the opening of a hitherto undeveloped mine, that by so much increased their wealth. The rabbinical mind was therefore better prepared by its peculiar training and habit of thought to admit the force of this argument as thus stated, than the more severely logical occidental mind, especially in these modern days when the strict methods of grammatico-historical exegesis have entirely superseded all others. Had the argument been put in this form with a western audience of our time, it would probably have served merely to raise fresh questions requiring fresh explanations. It would hardly have helped the situation at all, and certainly would not have silenced His questioners. But surely it is no real objection to an argument that it is cast into the form which is most likely to carry conviction to the minds of those towards whom it is directed. It only shows the skill of a teacher when he is able to do this, and it by no means follows that an argument is a sophism because it happens to be convincing to one certain type of mind more readily than to another.

We may even go further, and say that the argumentum ad hominem is a perfectly legitimate argument to use in controversy. Cavillers sometimes need to be silenced as well as convinced, and for this end they may be dealt with on their own principles, even when these are confessedly more or less erroneous. If the whole case is made to rest upon such arguments, of course the structure soon comes to the ground. But as auxiliaries they are often invaluable. The argument here, whatever may be thought of it, can hardly be said to be anything more than auxiliary. The doctrines of immortality and of the resurrection certainly do not depend upon

the meaning of this or of any other single text in the Old Testament or the New. But surely it militates somewhat against the theory of a purely rabbinical or personal argument here, that it is addressed primarily not to the recognized rabbinical class who were all Pharisees, but to the rationalistic Sadducees whose methods of exegesis were altogether different, and that it silenced them. That of course does not prove it altogether valid, but it does prove it to be something more than a rabbinical sophism.

Nor is it without significance that this argument against the Sadducees is given in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. This shows that the Apostolic Church fully appreciated the force of it as disposing effectually of the Sadducean contention. And though a considerable number in the early church were of Jewish extraction, the Christian literature of the first century, canonical and uncanonical, is surprisingly free from rabbinical conceits.

A good deal of unnecessary prejudice has been created against this argument by the supposition that the force of it rests upon the use of the present tense in the Lord's words to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham. &c.," instead of "I was." Even so acute a critic as Martineau so represents it. But this is altogether a mistake. For though the present tense of the verb "to be" is found here in the Greek of Matthew's report and in the Septuagint of Exodus, neither the original Hebrew nor the reports of Mark and Luke contain any verb at all. The absence of it from the Hebrew must have prevented Christ from building any argument upon it, and the want of it in the accounts of Mark and Luke, shows that they did not suppose Him to have done so. Its cogency does not depend upon such a trivial point as that.

The true key to the solution of the difficulty is to be found in the main idea which the words of God were in-