

For the Pearl.

## ANTIQUITY OF THE BIBLE.

The Sacred Scriptures are the most ancient writings in the universe. They contain the only authentic history of the earlier ages of the world. "Not to know what happened before thou wast born," says the proverb, "is to be always a child." Placed on a theatre where others have acted before us, and surrounded by monuments of the previous existence and of the labours of our progenitors, curiosity naturally excites an inquiry into the history of their pedigree and the story of their lives. The Scriptures gratify this curiosity and reward the inquiry. They exhibit the history of our species for more than four thousand years, from the cradle of its infancy in Paradise, till the advent of the Messiah. With whatever anxiety and care we retrace the current of history, when we ascend the stream of time a few centuries beyond the christian era, our compass is deranged and our pilot lost; we are driven on an unknown ocean, and enveloped by a darkness that may be felt, without a star to ascertain our latitude or direct our course. If we apply to the Roman historians for a guide; Rome itself was but of yesterday, and dates her origin but seven centuries and a half before the birth of Christ; and of the earlier parts of that scanty period, her annals were lost in the sacking of the city by the barbarian Brennus and his victorious Gauls.

If we turn our aching eyes to Greece for direction, they present no certainty of light anterior to their calculation by Olympiads, which commenced but 1766 years before the christian era, or about 23 years before the foundation of Rome. All beyond is involved in the impenetrable cloud of metamorphosis and mystic fable; in the story of her gods and her demigods, of her giants and superhuman heroes, in the legend of her golden and her silver age, and the carnal intercourse of her divinities with mortals. It is true the imperishable verses of her matchless poet, Homer, cast a feeble ray on the short period of the Trojan war, like a transient meteor in the midnight sky, which glares for a moment and then disappears, rendering the darkness still more perceptible; and excepting the Bible, of no other nation and in no other languages, are any authentic vestiges of early history extant. At an early period Egypt was populous, wealthy, and wise; but her hieroglyphics are inscrutable, and her pyramids are but splendid monuments of human vanity. Phœnicia, Tyre, Sidon, and Carthage spread the knowledge of letters and enriched the world with their adventurous navigation and lucrative commerce; but have left no historian to detail their discoveries or record their fame. The populous Nineveh is extinct, without a beam of light to direct posterity to the spot where she stood; the mighty Babylon has sunk, and has left no stone visible of her lofty tower, her hanging gardens, and her impregnable walls. The splendid and extensive ruins of Palmyra and Presepolis throw an awful gloom over the reflecting mind. These broken monuments of human grandeur testify the magnificence of their temples, the splendour of their palaces, and the skill and elegance of their architects; but the song of no bard remains to consecrate the fame of the stately princes who swayed the sceptre in those pompous capitals, or celebrate the exploits of their conquering heroes; and the heads that contrived, and the hands that raised the mighty fabrics, have mouldered in the dust, without an historian to record their names.

To the veracity of the narrative of Moses have been pompously opposed the supposed myriads of years in Chinese chronology, the Indoo institutes, the Chaldean and Arabian astronomical tables, and the recently discovered planisphere and zodiac of Egypt. That China began to be peopled immediately on the dispersion from Babel, we learn from the testimony of Moses himself, and their own chronology extends not, even in conjecture, beyond the period of their revered ancestor Fohi. But that the Fohi of China and the Noah of the Bible are the same personage, has been clearly proved; and a proper investigation of their own chronology fully corroborates the fact. When India was less known, we were told with much parade of the antiquity of its nations, of the sublime wisdom, the accurate philosophy, the mild and rational system of their moral and religious institutes. But a more intimate acquaintance with these nations has convinced all the learned that their chronology is fabulous, their philosophy childish, irrational, and absurd, and their religion cruel to its votaries, abhorrent to the finer feelings of the heart, and derogatory to every attribute of God. And the accuracy of modern astronomy has demonstrated that the most ancient astronomical tables extend not beyond the era of Babylon, and that every statement which anticipates that period, has been formed by retrograde calculations, inaccurately made, and discordant with time. And, finally, a French astronomer of high mathematical attainments, and himself a deist, has scientifically demonstrated that the Egyptian planisphere cannot be dated higher than the sixth or seventh century before the christian era, nor does he believe that it was ever designed to represent the celestial zodiac.

Thus, without some safer guide than the heathen world can furnish, would mankind be abandoned to the wilderness of hypothesis, and the distraction of discordant conjectures concerning the origin of their species and the length of time which has elapsed since first they were called into being by the voice of their Creator. Amid this oppressive gloom the unsullied blaze of Scripture

light directs our steps to the certainty of truth. The Holy Scriptures inform us in what place, and at what time, the original man emerged from the plastic hand of his Maker, and his history is traced in a regular succession of lineal descendants, till the peopled world had acquired an advanced degree of civilization, and each separate nation had acquired ability and means to compose the annals of its own history. The successive generations of mankind are recounted, with brief biographical memoirs of their history from primeval Adam to Noah. The dispersion of the projectors of Babel, and the re-peopling of the earth, are recorded in exact detail till the time of Abraham, whom God selected from among his idolatrous contemporaries as the depository of his revealed will to man. The numerous posterity of this faithful patriarch pass in review before us till they obtained the splendours of royalty in the person of Saul, of David, and of Solomon, and his successors, till the time of their captivity in Babylon, and thence through the variety of their chequered fate till the coming of Christ, and their final dispersion among the nations of the earth.

SIGMA.

**THE WHITE STONE.**—"To him that overcometh will I give a white stone." It is generally supposed by commentators that this refers to an ancient judicial custom of dropping a black stone into an urn when it is intended to condemn, and a white stone when the prisoner was acquitted. But this is an act so distinct from that described in the Scripture before us, "I will give him a white stone," that we are disposed to agree with those who think it refers rather to a custom of a very different kind, and not unknown to the classical reader, according with beautiful propriety to the circumstances before us. In primitive times, when travelling was rendered difficult from the want of places of public entertainment, hospitality was exercised by private individuals to a very great extent, of which, indeed, we find frequent traces in all history, and in none more than the Old Testament. Persons who partook of this hospitality, and those who practised it, frequently contracted habits of friendship and regard for each other; and it became a well-established custom, both among the Greeks and Romans, to provide their guests with some particular mark, which was handed down from father to son, and ensured hospitality and kind treatment whenever it was presented. This mark was usually a small stone or pebble, cut in half, and upon the halves of which the host and the guest mutually inscribed their names, and then interchanged them with each other. The production of this tessera was quite sufficient to ensure friendship for themselves or their descendants whenever they travelled again in the same direction; while it is evident that these stones required to be privately kept, and the name written upon them carefully concealed, lest others should obtain the privileges, instead of the person for whom they were intended. How natural, then, is the allusion to this custom in the words of the text, "I will give him to eat of the hidden manna;" and having done, having made himself partaker of my hospitality, having recognised him as my guest, my friend, "I will present him with the white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he which receiveth it." I will give him a pledge of my friendship, sacred and inviolable, known only to himself.—*Rev. H. Blunt's Practical Exposition of the Epistle to the Seven Churches of Asia.*

**MIRACLES.**—Avoid all absurd prejudices theoretically against miracles. They are inseparable from existence. Creation was a miracle. Its subsistence is not less so. The true idea of a miracle is, that it is an act of Divine power—an event which the material laws of nature without the greater law of the Divine agency could not effect. To describe a miracle as a violation of the laws of nature is an incorrect and an inapplicable definition; for all the laws of nature are in continual violation and counteraction by each other. Fire burns, but water extinguishes it; water is fluid, but cold converts it into a solid, and heat into air. It is the established course of nature, that all its laws should be thus violating each other. It is by such a violation that we roll yearly round the sun. This is the result of the attractive line continually violating the laws of that propulsive force which every planet has received. These two laws are in a constant struggle, each violating the other, neither prevailing; and therefore the result of their increasing conflict and counteraction is that forced compromise, ever resisted by each, but maintained by their very resistance, which appears in our circuitous orbit. We now go round the sun by no willing movement: instead of flying off from it, as one law urges us to do; and instead of falling into it, to which the other is always drawing us,—this mutual violation of each other's law compels our planet into that elliptical circuit which is the artificial product of this appointed contest.—*Sharon Turner.*

**THE VALUE OF THE SCRIPTURES TO WOMAN.**—Not only as the charter of salvation will woman prize the Bible, but, if her taste and judgment be properly cultivated, it will afford literary enjoyment and recreation. As the earliest record of this beautiful world and its many joyous tenants—of that convulsion of its surface to which the eye bears constant witness, and universal tradition lends its testimony,—its historical value will rise higher when compared with other standards. Fancy may fill up the glimpses it affords of domestic life in the primeval ages, and the

traces it yields of patriarchal customs and manners long passed away. The geography and natural history of the Scriptures become more interesting and instructive when elucidated by the investigations of modern travellers. Prophecies and their fulfilment recorded in its pages are evidenced in history by the rise and fall of empires, and merit an attentive examination; while imagination may safely revel in the glowing pictures of that blessed eternity revealed in the Bible alone. The beauty and variety of style in Scripture defy competition and preclude satiety; the simplicity of its historical relations—the majesty of its triumphal odes—the awfulness of its threatenings—the beauty of its imagery—the grandeur of its prophecies—and the tenderness of its invitations,—no human composition can ever equal. They only can appreciate its attractions "who make the book of God's word their chosen pleasure ground;" and how can the time which many women possess be more profitably employed, how can their researches be more amply rewarded, than in this mine of intellectual wealth? If the female mind and taste be formed upon the model of this matchless volume, they will recoil from those light and pernicious writings of the day, which warp the judgment and mislead the affections; while the Bible provides for her who follows its guidance a pathway to knowledge wherein she cannot err, a field for investigation bounded only by the intellect, and topics of the imagination circumscribed only by eternity.—*Duties of Woman arising from her Obligations to Christianity; by Mrs. Riley.*

**LITERARY STYLE.**—On style, Milton holds this language: "For me, readers, although I cannot say I am utterly untrained in those rules which the best rhetoricians have written in any learned language, yet true eloquence I find to none but the serious and hearty love of truth; and that whose mind soever is fully possessed of a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others—when such a man would speak, his words, by what I can express, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places."

Dr. Johnson lays it down, that he who would acquire a style elegant and smooth, must devote his days and his nights to the reading of Addison.

Dr. Franklin's plan was, to read a number of the Spectator, shut the book, and try how nearly he could imitate the original.

Longinus advises a writer, when about to attempt a lofty flight, to conceive within himself how Homer, or any one of the master spirits of the world, would have expressed himself upon such a subject. In our day one may ask himself—how would Milton, or Cooper, or Robert Hall have expressed himself?

Foster, in his inimitable Essays, observes,—False eloquence is like a false alarm of thunder, where a sober man, that is not apt to startle at sounds, looks out to see if it be not the rumbling of a cart. Eloquence resides in the thought, and no words can make that eloquent which would not be so in the plainest that could possibly express the sense.

**CLASSICAL PRINTER.**—Stephens, the celebrated classical printer, is thus mentioned by Baillet, in the *Judgment des Savans*: "The economy of Robert Stephens' house was excellent. He received no workmen into his printing house but such as were skilled in Greek and Latin, and capable of being master elsewhere. He had, besides this, men and maids, who were not allowed to talk any thing but Latin, as well as the workmen in the printing house. His wife and daughter understood it perfectly, and were obliged, with all the domestics, to talk nothing else. So that the store houses, the chambers, the shop, the kitchen—in a word, from the top to the bottom, all spoke Latin at Robert Stephens's. This generous printer had usually ten men of learning in his house, who corrected his impressions under him; and, not satisfied with the application he gave to the correction of the several proofs which came from the presses, he publicly exposed the printed sheets before they were taken off, and promised a reward to such as should find any faults in them."

**MILITARY PRIDE.**—A farmer was elected to a corporalship in a militia company. His wife, after discoursing with him for some time on the advantage which the family would derive from his exaltation, inquired in a doubting tone, "Husband, will it be proper for us to let our children play with the neighbour's now?" One of the little urchins eagerly asked, "Are we not all corporals?" "Tut," said the mother, "hold your tongue; there is no one corporal, but your father and myself."—*American Anecdotes.*

**PHILOSOPHY OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.**—"Lest I should forget to mention it, I put down here a rebuke which, later in life, Sir Walter gave in my hearing to his daughter Anne. She happened to say of something, I forget what, that she could not abide it—it was vulgar. "My love," said her father, "you speak like a very young lady; do you know, after all, the meaning of this word vulgar?" "Tis only common; nothing that is common, except wickedness, can deserve to be spoken of in a tone of contempt; and when you have lived to my years, you will be disposed to agree with me in thanking God that nothing really worth having or caring about in this world is uncommon."