

SPIRIT OF THE XIX. CENTURY.

VOL. II.

JUNE, 1843.

No. 6.

A DISCOURSE AGAINST MILLERISM AND MILLENARIANISM, BY THE
REV'D W. BAIRD, OF ST. MARY'S, GEORGIA.

3 **PETRA** i. 19.—We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star, arise in your hearts.

IN our onward march, we see nothing before us. The future is all dark. The first thing, generally, that we know of events is their actual occurrence. And yet there is implanted in us an inextinguishable desire to know the future. Our solicitude about the future becomes at times exceedingly great, absorbing every other concern. It is not strange then that misguided men, wholly ignorant of the oracles of God, should resort to heathen oracles, and the various other pretended sources of divination; and that those who have the Scriptures, should eagerly pry into them, and strive, if possible to find out what phases the future will exhibit. And, thanks be to God, he has not left us to the fruitless conjectures, and fearful bodings of our own unassisted minds. In his great goodness, he has condescended to make not only a revelation of his will in regard to our duty, and the way of life thro' his Son; but he has thrown much light ahead, relieving us from our native darkness. The principal tops of things, the great landmarks of the future he has distinctly pointed out; and in regard to many events, whose foreshewing was intended either for special instruction to the great masses; or for comfort, or warning, or terror to those who were subjects of the prediction, he has descended into all the minutiae of historic relation. This, I say, he has often done. But if in other instances, clouds and darkness have been round about the portentous truths, which seem at random thrown forth, or are under bold and singular figures presented; if only their fulfilment makes them known, what has vain man to object? If God's *judgments* are a great deep, why may not his prophetic declarations be the same? God has in this respect, as in every other, a perfect right to do as seemeth to him good. We are distinctly taught "that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we thro' patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." But in all things written, and that intended, we find that God's manner of conveying instruction is exceedingly various. And it by no means follows that every thing intended for our instruction must be fully understood by us in order that it have its intended effect. It is more important to be good than wise. Were all prophecy so framed as only to make us wise, it might leave us less Christian in character than it found us. Whatsoever things were written aforetime

according to what he has revealed. And who will say that he has not shewn us all our duty?—Neither will you allow the follies and mistakes of others to diminish, in the slightest degree, either your reverence for God's Word, or your confidence in his faithfulness. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" Look at what he has done, and can you doubt the rest? His divine truth—even if not yet understood—let it still reign in your hearts, in all its serene majesty and unsullied glory. What you know not now you shall know hereafter.

"God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."

In the closing language then, of the heavenly revealer of these visions, I would say to each, "Go thy way, Daniel." Go, as before, about all your duties. Dismiss your apprehensions of the immediate dissolution of nature—it will not overtake you! but "thou shalt rest!"—rest as the numerous generations before you all have done—rest in the embrace of common death—rest in the grave—"and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." *Your own departure* then, and not that of the heavens, you will make your great concern. That event, you need no prophet to tell you, must be near—and it may come suddenly—at any moment! O! to be found then at peace with God! Nothing else is worthy of comparison with this. But you must stand in *your own lot*—yes, your own lot, whatsoever you make it here. In view then of the end, and of the recompense of reward—the everlasting life; or the shame and everlasting contempt—to the one or the other of which you must awake—live and act—waiting till your Lord shall come—come, not in his bodily presence, to reign on earth; but come by his messenger death, to release you from the body, and take you home to his kingdom.

**CONTROVERSY WITH THE DOMESTIC CHAPLAINS OF THE "ARCH-
BISHOP OF BALTIMORE."—NO. VIII. OF THE PROTESTANTS.
—THE APOCRYPHA; REPLY TO THE ARGUMENTS OF THE
PRIESTS.**

WHETHER the gentlemen who have undertaken to reply to our article on the Apocrypha "understand rightly the technicalities of logic" or not, we, of course, cannot confidently determine; but it is abundantly plain from the whole tenor and drift of their communications that they understand nothing of the *thing* itself. In proof of this position, we appeal not only to their imperfect conceptions and inadequate statements of the arguments of others, but to the peculiar character of their own reasonings. If it were not that imbecility of mind is one of those terrible misfortunes which should always command our pity, we might treat with becoming ridicule and contempt the awkward efforts of these gentlemen to deal with things too high for their capacities. But, in compassion to their weakness, we shall content ourselves with pointing out to others and deploring for their own sakes the lamentable discrepancy between the conclusions to which

their premises legitimately lead, and those which they themselves profess to have deduced from them.

In regard to the Apocryphal books, the point in dispute between us and the Romanists is whether or not they were inspired of God. Papists undertake to prove—nay these gentlemen declare that *they have proved* that this is the case;—that is, they profess to have established by positive testimony the fact of inspiration. What then are the arguments which support this conclusion? Why, 1, they are found in the old Italic version, therefore they must have been given by inspiration of God.—Admirable logic! All the world knows, or ought to know, that the old Italic version was made, not from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint, and of course contained the very books which the Septuagint original from which it was made contained. At what time the Apocryphal writings became incorporated in the same volume with the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, it is difficult to determine; but it is certain, from the testimony of Josephus, Philo and the Talmud, that neither the Jews of Palestine nor those of Egypt ever received any books as *inspired* but those which Protestants now receive, and which were found in Hebrew. Then if these books found their way into the copies of the Septuagint without being received as inspired, there is no difficulty in accounting for their appearance in the old Italic version, without supposing them to have proceeded from God. Who believes that because these books are found in the authorized English translation of the Bible, therefore, the church of England receives them as inspired?—The major proposition of the Papal argument is, that whatever books were found in the Italic version were inspired: which is a mere gratuitous assumption, which they have not proved, cannot prove, and is so manifestly ridiculous that its very statement is enough to overthrow it.—The truth is, the adoption of the Apocryphal books into general use, for ecclesiastical purposes, at an early period of the Christian church,—just as the church of England now permits some of them to be read in the congregations of the people—sufficiently explains their introduction into the ancient versions of the Scriptures. They were regarded—at least some of them—as edifying and instructive; they were read as interesting moral and historical discourses, and for devotional purposes were bound up with the inspired writings, just as now a good Episcopalian encloses his Prayer Book and Psalter, or a good Seceder his Bible and metrical version of the Psalms in the same volume. But as the Episcopalian never dreams that his Prayer book is inspired, nor the Seceder that Rouse's rhymes proceeded from God, so the early Christians would have shuddered at the thought that the Apocryphal books belonged to the same category with the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

2. The old Syriac version is also appealed to, as showing that these books are inspired. Now, the only Syriac version which can have any weight in this controversy is what is called the *Peschito*: and it is to this, we suppose, that the gentlemen allude. If so, their reference is peculiarly unfortunate. That version was made directly from the Hebrew, and, of course, contained no books which were not found in the Hebrew original: and, with all their ignorance, these gentlemen will hardly pretend to assert that the Hebrew copies of the Old Testament contain the Apocrypha. We presume that they have been misled

by the Syriac version found in Walton's Polyglott, not being aware that the Apocrypha was added from other sources.

3. Much stress has been laid upon the 47th Canon of the Council of Carthage, and upon the testimony of Augustin himself, who was a member of that Council, as also of the Council of Hippo, which passed a similar decree in favor of the *canonical authority* of those books. It is very evident that by *canonical* the Council of Carthage did not mean *inspired*. Those who will take the trouble to consult the *The-saurus Ecclesiasticus* of Suicer, on the word *canon*, will find it abundantly proved by quotations from the ancient Fathers, that not until comparatively recent times has its signification been *exclusively* confined to a collection of *inspired writings*. It anciently denoted, sometimes a book or catalogue generally—a collection of things which belonged to the Church—a book that was used in the church,—and it was even applied to a collection of hymns to be sung on festivals, and to the catalogue of the members of the church. It was particularly employed to designate the catalogue of books that might be used in the public assemblies of Christians for instruction and edification. That this was the sense in which it was employed by the Council of Carthage, when it speaks of Apocryphal writings as *canonical*, is evident from the fact that the canon was *conditional*,—the Church beyond the sea was to be consulted for its confirmation “De confirmando isto canone Trans-marina Ecclesia consulatur,” is the language of an ancient note upon it. The Council of Carthage then received these books as canonical, provided the trans-marine churches would consent. Surely it could not mean that these books are *inspired*, provided the trans-marine churches will agree that they are so. The evidence of their inspiration was either complete to the Council, or it was not. If it was complete, they would have said absolutely and unconditionally that these books are a part of the word of God. If the evidence was not complete, that is, not satisfactory, as a conditional canon shows that it must have been, the testimony of the Council is against the Apocrypha.

If it had been a certain and notorious fact that these books were given by inspiration of God, it was the duty of the Council, as a faithful witness for the truth, to have declared it. There was no need of consulting the church beyond the sea in regard to a plain matter-of-fact which was unquestioned and notorious. But if we suppose that canon had reference to the books *which might be profitably read* in the public assemblies of Christians, then it was natural and proper to consult other churches, for the purpose of securing uniformity in the public worship of God.

Again: the very phraseology of the canon shows that it was intended to determine not what books were *inspired*, but what books might be publicly *read*. “Item placuit,” is the form of expression, “ut præter Scripturas canonicas, nihil in ecclesia *legatur* sub nomine divinarum Scripturarum.”—The books that were read in the churches were called *divine*, as in the decree before us, not because they were all *inspired*, but because they were used for divine or godly purposes—for edification and improvement. The following passage from the *Treatise of Junilius De Partibus Divinae Legis*, will clearly show that the words *divine* and *inspired* were not synonymous. “Quomodo divinatorum

librorum auctoritas consideratur? Quia quidam perfectae auctoritatis sunt—quidam mediae—quidam nullius.” It is impossible that any Christian man, who had the least reverence for the authority of God, could say of what He had revealed by His Spirit, that it possessed no authority at all. And yet, *Junilius*, a Christian Bishop in the sixth century, asserts this of books which, in his day, were received as *divine* and canonical. The conclusion is unavoidable that in such connections these words mean something very different from *inspired*—The application, therefore, of these terms by the Council of Carthage to the Apocryphal writings, determines nothing as to their *inspired* authority—it only determines that they might be profitably read.

The testimony of Augustin, however, who was a member of the Council, puts the matter beyond all doubt. He speaks of these books as *canonical*, and yet virtually *denies* their *inspiration*. In his *Retractions* he acknowledges his error in quoting the book of *Ecclesiasticus* as *prophetic*, that is, inspired, when it was not certain that it was written by a prophet. Lib. 1. c. 20.

Speaking of the Books of *Maccabees*, he says: “Et hanc Scripturam quæ appellatur Macchabæorum, non habent Judæi sicut Legem et Prophetas et Psalmos quibus Dominus testimonium perhibet. Sed recepta est ab Ecclesia non inutiliter, si sobrie legatur et audiatur, maxime propter illos Macchabæos qui pro Dei lege sicut veri martyres a persecutoribus tam indigna atque horrenda perpesi sunt.”* Here Augustin evidently justifies the reception of the books of Maccabees into the canon, *chiefly* on account of the moral tendency of the history. It is plain that he could not have regarded them as inspired, since their inspiration would have been the strongest of all possible reasons for receiving them. He receives them only because they might be profitably read and heard, showing that by *canonical* he meant what might be read for edification and improvement. Again, the fact which Augustin mentions,† that these books were read from a lower desk than those which were confessedly inspired, and by the inferior ecclesiastical officers, shows that although they were regarded as canonical, they were not regarded as coming from God. It is evident that all truly inspired writings—Trent itself being witness—must be received with equal veneration and piety. And hence the only Council which ever dared to assert the inspiration of the Apocrypha, did not hesitate to place them on an equal footing with Moses and the Prophets. That the ancient Church did have canon for public reading, distinct from the catalogue of the inspired writings, will also appear from the following testimony of *Jerom*,—and, with Romanists, *Jerom's* testimony should be decisive, since they are compelled to believe that he was inspired or abandon the authenticity of the Vulgate. “Sicut ergo *Judith* et *Tobie* et *Macchabæorum* libros legit quidem ecclesia sed inter canonicas Scripturas non recepit, sic et hæc duo volumina (*Ecclesiasticus* and *Wisdom*) legat ad ædificationem plebis, non ad auctoritatem ecclesiasticorum dogmatum confirmandam.”‡ To this may be added the testimony of *Athanasius* to the same purport: *ως οτι εστι και ιτερα βιβλια τουτων ξωθιου, &c.*||

* Cont. Gaudent. Donat. Lib. 1, c. 81.

† De Prædest. Sanct. Lib. 1, c. 14.

‡ Præf. in Lib. Salom.

|| Paschal Epistle.

As then the word *canonical* is confessedly ambiguous, as a meaning may be put upon it justified by ancient usage and a particular practice of the early church, which saves the Council of Carthage and Augustin himself from egregious folly and disgraceful trifling,—it certainly devolves upon those who adduce these witnesses as sustaining the decision of the Council of Trent, to prove unanswerably that canonical and inspired are uniformly used synonymously by the ancient fathers, or their whole argument falls to the ground.

It is one thing to assert that these books are canonical, in the sense that they may be profitably read in the public service of the Church—it is quite another to affirm that their authors wrote as “they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” That they were canonical in the Western churches in the days of Augustin, in the former sense, we are not at all disposed to deny; that they ever were canonical, in the latter, we boldly and unhesitatingly pronounce to be false. The Papist does not make out his argument when he quotes the decrees of councils and the writings of individual fathers, applying the epithets canonical and divine to these books, unless he shows at the same time, that these words, notoriously equivocal in themselves, are used in such passages as synonymous with *inspired*. The issue between us and Rome is on the point of *inspiration*. She affirms that God is the author of these books, and we deny it. The question is not whether the Western Churches read them or not—whether the early fathers quoted them or not—or whether they regarded them as instructive or not—the question is, was God their author? And, while this is the issue, the Romanist only exposes himself and his cause to contempt, by elaborate proofs of what no Protestant would deem it of any importance to dispute with him.

4. The reception of these books by the Greek Church, has been pleaded as an argument for their divine authority, but how it bears upon the point in dispute we are at a loss to determine. The Greek Church, in this matter, is in precisely the same predicament with the Church of Rome.—She receives them upon the same grounds that Rome does: that is, through ignorance of the whole subject. The introduction of these books into the public worship of the Church, to be read for edification and improvement, laid the foundation for an undue reverence for their authority, and prepared the way for their being eventually received as the sacred oracles of God. The distinction was gradually lost sight of between the ecclesiastical canon and the canon of inspiration—between the books which might be read and the books which were inspired: and as they were bound up together in the same collection, we are not to be surprised that, in process of time, the designing should teach, and the ignorant should believe, that all the books in the collection possessed equal authority. After the schism which separated the Greek and Roman Church, the Greeks retained the Scriptures to which they had been accustomed, in the form to which they had been accustomed; and, like their brethren of Rome, were too careless or too ignorant to make the necessary distinction. The testimony of the Greek and Roman Churches, then, is only *one* testimony, unless the Greek Church has *grounds* for receiving the Apocrypha which the Romish has not. If the Greek Church receive them upon good grounds, it is well; if not, her testimony is good for

nothing. Let us have the reasons, and not the naked testimony itself. So shallow and flimsy are the pretexes of the Romanists for their blasphemous additions to the word of God.*

The reply of the learned gentlemen to our *positive considerations*, which they will have to be *negative*, deserves a passing notice, as affording a striking illustration of their utter incapacity to comprehend an argument. So accustomed, themselves, in defence of their vain and idolatrous inventions, their gross and flagrant usurpation in the church of God, to string together as premises and conclusions, propositions but slightly, if at all, connected, they seem to forget that Protestants' minds are not of the same mould: and have indirectly attributed to us a weakness which belongs only to themselves. It could not, surely, have been from design that they have mis-stated our arguments;—we would not willingly charge them with such a fraud. How then could it have happened, but through defect of understanding? Our readers, perhaps, will be as much amazed as ourselves at the statement of our argument which those logical gentlemen have given. According to them, our No. v. attempts to show that the Apocryphal books are not inspired—1, “because they were not contained in the Jewish canon, and our Saviour did not instruct the Jews to insert them in their canon; 2, because some of the early Fathers do not mention these books as a part of the written word of God; and, 3, because these books exhibit no internal evidence of their inspiration.” Now, our readers will remember that our arguments were, 1, that Jesus Christ *sanctioned* the conduct of the Jews in *rejecting* the Apocrypha; 2, that the early Fathers and Councils unanimously testify—so far as they have borne any testimony upon the subject at all—that these books *were not inspired*; and, consequently, were not to be received *with equal piety and veneration* with the word of God; 3, that these books, at least some of them, to all intents and purposes, *disclaim* being *inspired*.

In replying to what they conceive to be our first argument, they amuse themselves and their readers by telling us that the Jews really regarded the Apocrypha with profound respect and veneration. And Maimonides is brought in to testify that “they were ranked by the Jews in the *second class of inspired writings*.”

What can be meant by the *second class of inspired writings* we are unable to divine. According to Trent, all inspired writings possess *equal authority*, and are to be received with *equal piety and veneration*. If then Maimonides testifies that the authority of the Apocrypha was not equal with that of the Hebrew Scriptures, he testifies of course, that they did not proceed from God in the *same way*. In other words, he testifies that in a strict and proper sense—in the sense of Trent itself, they were not *inspired at all*. If their being treated by the Jews with respect and veneration, is a proof of inspiration, then Plato, Aristotle, and all the heathen sages should, upon the same sort of evidence, be placed upon a level with Moses, David and Isaiah. To respect a book is one thing—to believe its inspiration is another, and he only

*This case is argued as if the allegation of the Priests about the Greek Church were true; whereas we believe it to be false, and could prove it so, if it were of any importance to the present argument.

exposes himself and his cause to contempt who supposes that he has proved the latter when he has only asserted the former.

We showed conclusively in our No. v. that the Jews *rejected* the Apocrypha from their canon of inspired writings—that our Saviour sanctioned their conduct by approving their canon and thus virtually condemned the Apocrypha by his own authority; and to the clear and indubitable testimony which we adduced in support of these positions we are now gravely told that the Jews after all *really* respected the Apocrypha and thought very highly of them—*therefore* they *must have been inspired*. One is conscious of mental degradation in stooping to notice such miserable stuff, and nothing but regard for the sacred interests of truth could reconcile us to coming into collision with men whose minds are evidently not framed to discern the distinction between declamation and argument, rhodomontade and proof.

Their reply to our second argument is already sufficiently answered in another part of this article. We may notice here, however, their anxiety to evade the true question and introduce another. They would be glad, no doubt, to draw us off into a discussion concerning the grounds on which we receive the Hebrew Scriptures; but we shall confine them to the single point of the *inspiration* of the Apocrypha. That *point* they must *prove* or abandon their cause. It adds nothing to the proof of that point, neither does it bear upon the strength of our argument to remind us of doubts which have existed at different times upon the minds of particular individuals in regard to the Divine authority of any of the books which protestants receive as inspired.

Their pretended reply to our third argument is evasive and disingenuous in the highest degree. We proved that some of these books to all intents and purposes disclaimed being inspired, and that others contained statements which were utterly inconsistent with the supposition that they came from God. They contain in other words, flat contradiction and palpable lies. Now those are not *difficulties* to be reconciled with their Divine authority—they are sheer impossibilities. A book that comes from God *cannot profess* to be merely human, and *cannot* contain falsehood, contradiction and lies. It is utterly and absolutely impossible; and none could harbor the supposition but those whose consciences have been seared by long familiarity with blasphemy, and whose understandings have been given over to strong delusions in order that they might believe a lie. Now these plain and palpable impossibilities are met by telling us that there are *difficulties* in the writings confessedly inspired. We grant that there are *difficulties*—but we deny *that there are lies*, and we deny that *any of them* come to us only in the name of man.