

**THE GENUINE AND APOCRYPHAL  
GOSPELS COMPARED, A CHARGE,  
DELIVERED TO THE CLERGY OF THE  
ARCHDEACONRY OF DERBY, AT THE  
VISITATIONS AT DERBY AND  
CHESTERFIELD, JUNE 6 AND 7, 1822**

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The genuine and apocryphal Gospels compared, a charge, delivered to the clergy of the archdeaconry of derby, at the visitations at derby and Chesterfield, june 6 and 7, 1822 by Samuel Butler

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**SAMUEL BUTLER**

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*The Genuine and Apocryphal Gospels compared.*

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A

**CHARGE,**

DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY OF THE ARCHDEACONRY OF DERBY,

AT THE

**Visitations at Derby and Chesterfield,**

JUNE 6 & 7, 1822,

**AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.**

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BY SAMUEL BUTLER, D.D. F.R.S. & S.A. &c.

ARCHDEACON OF DERBY,

AND HEAD MASTER OF SHREWSBURY SCHOOL.

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1822.

**I**N the following pages there are two arguments which bear a close affinity to those adduced by Mr. Rennell in his "Proofs of Inspiration." One of them relates to the manner in which the books of the New Testament were collected; the other to the inferences drawn from a comparison between the genuine and apocryphal Gospels.

The Author of this Charge feels it right to state, that it was written long before Mr. Rennell's book was published, and that he never saw that work till he was on the very point of proceeding to hold his Visitation. He was, however, much gratified in finding his own views of the subject confirmed, by so striking and wholly accidental a coincidence with those of the acute and able Christian Advocate.

Should any apology be necessary for the delay between the delivery of this Charge and its publication, the Author begs leave to say, that he has been absent from England from the time of his Visitation to the beginning of the present month.

In deference to the opinion of the Clergy of the Archdeaconry, who conceived that a cheap edition of this Charge would be useful, the Author has caused it to be printed also in the octavo form for general circulation.

*Stroudbury, August 7, 1822.*

A

## CHARGE,

&c.

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MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

**O**N my introduction to you last year, it seemed expedient that I should enter into those matters which are immediately connected with the office I have to discharge among you; that I should explain to you my views and expectations on that subject, and express those wishes, which I most deeply feel, to promote on all occasions the interests of religion and the Established Church, and your own personal comforts and convenience as far as they are any way connected with my jurisdiction.

I said, on that occasion, all that appeared to me so connected as to be inseparable from the topic I had chosen. Something

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remained, relative to the *internal*, if I may be allowed to refer what I then said to the *external* concerns of the church; which I had intended to reserve for our present assembling; but circumstances have occurred which induce me to defer this discussion to some future period (as it may be taken up with propriety at any time), and at present lead me to call your attention to a different subject.

Before I enter upon this, however, I cannot but notice the heavy loss which this Deanery, and in particular the place where we are now assembled, has sustained since our last meeting. In one case, a venerable member of our society, full of years and good deeds, whose beneficence was as unbounded as his means were extensive, and whose charities were as much beyond the measure of ordinary bounty, as his years were beyond the ordinary period of human existence, has been gathered, at an almost patriarchal age, like a ripe shock of corn, to the harvest of the blessed. In the other, one of the most useful and most exemplary of our brethren, whose loss will be long, and deeply, and generally deplored, and the remembrance of whose zeal and virtues will be piously and affectionately cherished in this extensive parish, of which he was forty years the diligent and faithful pastor, has been called to his great reward. Let our regret for the loss of these good men be mitigated, by our reliance on the promises made to such faithful servants by our Saviour in his Gospel: *We sorrow not as men without hope, for those that go hence in the Lord.* We rest our own eternal hopes, on living as they have lived, on departing



hence as they have departed: Let us be consoled in our christian pilgrimage by this faith, and animated by these examples.\*

None of you can be ignorant of the attempts which from time to time have been made, and are still making, to propagate infidel doctrines. Religion itself, its ordinances and its ministers, have been attacked with a degree of active hostility, which has seldom been equalled, never surpassed, and which, while it shews the earnestness of our antagonists, betrays also their consciousness of our strength and importance as teachers and guardians of our flocks. But besides the direct and open warfare thus carried on against religion, a more secret and insidious mode of attack has been resorted to by some of its adversaries, who endeavour to sap the very foundations of our faith; and to lessen the confidence and veneration of mankind for the Holy Scripiures, by variously directed attempts to weaken their authority; it being evident to these men, that if they can undermine the very foundation of our faith, the superstructure that is built on it must inevitably fall.

Among the most insidious of these attacks is a publication entitled "The Apocryphal New Testament," which appeared

\* This part of the Charge, which was delivered at Chesterfield only, alludes to the death of those excellent men, the Rev. Francis Gisborne, the munificent Rector of Staveley, aged upwards of ninety, and the Rev. George Bossley, so beloved in the extensive parish of Chesterfield, of which he was forty years the faithful minister, that his parishioners, with a feeling truly honourable to him and to themselves, went into general mourning on his decease.

in the course of last year, the obvious intention of which is, to throw a degree of doubt and uncertainty on those books of the New Testament, which we receive as genuine and canonical.

Now though I feel a perfect assurance that every one of you, my Reverend Brethren, is impressed with a conviction of the truth and authenticity of those sacred records, which you have solemnly declared that you believe, and on which you rest the very grounds of your faith; though I have also no doubt that you feel it your duty, and in conformity with that duty *ARE ready at all times, to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*; still the subject to which I have alluded is so important, the poison intended to be disseminated is contained in so small and tangible a compass, and the antidotes to that poison in so wide a range, and, generally speaking, so much out of the way of a parochial clergyman's library, that I trust I shall not be doing an unacceptable service, if I make these Apocryphal gospels the subject of my present observations.

In order to do this with effect, I must just glance at the grounds which we have for the authenticity of those books of the New Testament which we actually receive. Our enquiry need not go farther, because the books of the Old Testament are not impugned by the publication in question, and are acknowledged as genuine by the greatest adversaries of Christianity, in whose keeping they have been.

The evidence, then, for the canonical books of the New Testament may be considered either as external or internal.

The external evidence may be divided into direct, traditional, and inferential.

By the direct evidence, I mean that immediate and historical proof which we receive from those authors whose writings have come down to us; these are principally the Fathers of the church, in whose writings the books of the New Testament are incessantly quoted, so that even the whole text of Scripture might be recovered, from them, were all the copies of the New Testament destroyed.

By the traditional, I mean that of authors who have not come down to us, but whose testimony has been quoted by those who have—such are frequently mentioned in the writings of the Fathers.

By the inferential, I mean that of heretics who admitted some portions of scripture and rejected others, as the Ebionites, or who altered the sacred text in some parts and retained it in others, as the Marcionites, because they at least bear testimony to the *existence* of those parts of scripture which they reject or alter; besides these there are certain opponents of Christianity, such as Porphyry and Celsus, who on the same ground, as far as we have any fragments of them, become valuable and important witnesses to the *existence* of the sacred text; to these