

**REVIEW**  
**OF THE**  
**EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.**

**IN A**  
**SERIES OF LECTURES,**  
**DELIVERED IN BROADWAY HALL, NEW-YORK,**  
**AUGUST, 1829.**

To which is prefixed, an extract from  
**WYTENBACH'S OPUSCULA,**  
**ON THE ANCIENT NOTICES OF THE JEWISH NATION**  
**PREVIOUS TO THE TIME OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.**

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**BY ABNER KNEELAND.**

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**" Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. "—PAUL.**

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**SIXTH EDITION.**

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“ A Review of the Evidences of Christianity ; in a Series of Lectures, delivered in Broadway Hall, New-York, August, 1829. To which is prefixed, an extract from Wyttenbach's Opuscula on the ancient notices of the Jewish nation, previous to the time of Alexander the Great. By Abner Kneeland. ‘ Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.’—*Paul.*”

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**FRED. J. BETTS,**

***Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.***

**J. Q. Adams, Printer and Publisher.**

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## PREFACE.

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### KIND AND GENTLE READER,

If thy mind is already made up, with a determination never to alter it, *right* or *wrong*, that the Bible is of divine origin, and comes to thee, claiming thy belief by divine authority, and that the christian doctrine is certainly true, so true, that it is *impious* to re-examine the evidences on which it is founded, then I would advise thee not to read this book; for notwithstanding all thy prepossessions and prejudices in favor of the Bible and christian doctrine, thy faith will be most assuredly shaken, if not wholly destroyed, on perusing this work. But if thou art still an enquirer after truth, and art ready to receive and be contented with whatever is true, more or less; if thou art satisfied that truth never loses any thing by investigation, but like the precious diamond, the more it is rubbed the brighter it will shine, then I sincerely entreat thee to lay aside thy prepossessions, and candidly examine the following pages.

Like many others, I once thought that a belief in future existence was absolutely necessary to present happiness. I have discovered my mistake. Time, a thousand years hence, is no more to me *now*, than time a thousand years past. As no event could have harmed me, when I existed not, so no event can possibly harm *me* when *I* am no more. By anticipating and calculating too much on future felicity, and dreading, or at least *fearing*, future misery, man often loses sight of present enjoyments, and neglects present duties. When men shall discover that nothing can be known beyond this life, and that there is no rational ground for any such belief, they will begin to think more

of improving the condition of the human species. Their whole thoughts will then be turned upon what man has done, and what he can still do, for the benefit of man. As they will be delivered from all fear of 'invisible voluntary agents, that may do them harm, so they will no longer look up to such agents for help. But they will study more their own powers and the powers and properties of nature. They will discover how much time and labor is spent entirely uselessly, and worse than uselessly—perniciously; that so far from improving the condition of man, such labors only tend to destroy his own peace, and render him an enemy to his fellow man.

If the immense labor that is devoted daily, yearly, and constantly, in making Bibles and a thousand foolish tracts, that scatter moral darkness, rather than light, and do not serve to improve the condition of man at all, at least on the whole; if the millions of dollars drawn from the people annually for which they either have no return, or else that which is worse than none, were expended in feeding and clothing the children of the land, and in giving them all a useful education, both ignorance and poverty, and much of their almost inseparable companions, vice and wretchedness, might be banished from our earth.

If the clergy, one and all, were to turn their attention to these things, they might soon become the most useful people in the nation, without laboring, perhaps, much harder than many of them do at present; whereas, now (I speak my mind freely) I consider them the most useless. If they are useful at all, they are useful not as clergymen, but as mere moral men, studying how to make mankind useful and happy in *this* world, instead of preparing their souls for *another*; when they are totally ignorant, both of the souls of men and of the world for which they are preparing them.

But, it may be asked, will not these lectures be as useless as the Bible, and as the tracts of which there is so much complaint?

To which I answer, I hope the time will come when this will be the case. But that time is not yet. These lectures will be useful only as an antidote to the *poison* of the others! Happy, indeed, will it be for mankind, when they shall no longer stand in need of such an antidote. Medicine is not useful for food; but only as an antidote to disease. Mankind have been *deceived*, and these lectures are necessary to undeceive them. But when they shall be undeceived, and children taught as they should be, to know what can be known, and to believe nothing but what can be rationally inferred from known facts, then, but not till then, these lectures will be no longer necessary or useful.

If it be asked, what has prompted me to this investigation? I answer, PERSECUTION! Notwithstanding all the discrepancies I found in the gospels; notwithstanding I had become convinced that the Pentateuch, in its present form, was compiled since the Babylonish captivity; notwithstanding all my doubts and scepticism growing out of the internal evidence of the Bible; yet, had I been permitted honestly to declare those discoveries, my feelings in favor of immortality were such, that I doubt whether I should ever have undertaken this last investigation, had it not been for *persecution*! But I now honestly and sincerely declare, that although I thought it very cruel at the time, neither can I persuade myself to believe that it was done from justifiable motives, yet I am now glad, heartily glad, that I was thus persecuted. If people only knew what it is to be free, they would be no longer slaves—slaves to the opinions of others, the worst kind of slavery. Man free (I speak of man collectively) is lord of this globe. He neither sees nor knows, loves nor fears, any being above him—the ocean is his fish-pond, the extended forests are his park; he makes every thing in his power subservient to his use. He has, in some measure, control over the elements; and to uncontrollable powers he cheerfully submits, because to such powers he attaches no *will*, either good or bad; whether earthquakes, tornadoes, volcanoes, or the sweep-

ing sirocco, they are neither commanded, nor can their force be stayed by man. But, aside from these, he enslaves as many of the other animals as he can make subservient to his use—(wicked man enslaves his own species!) and feels no control of MIND whatever; but mutually consults kindred minds, for the mutual benefit of the whole race. While man, enslaved, is a poor helpless creature; he feels that he is indebted to the will of another for his very existence, as well as for every moment of his life. He cringes through fear of imaginary demons; he sacrifices much of his time and labor to appease the wrath of imaginary gods; or else to curry their favor; he maintains a useless horde of sycophants and hypocrites, which, as he thinks, have more influence with these invisible agents than himself: in a word, he hardly dares to think for himself, much less to speak his own thoughts. What is the value of life in such a condition? Let the man, therefore, who dares to be free, read, and candidly weigh, the evidences and arguments he will find in the following pages. Should any errors be discovered, let them be pointed out; and they shall be attended to by the author's own free man, but the public's very humble servant,

ABNER KNEELAND.

*New-York, November 2, 1829.*

N. B. I have added a note here, for the sake of making a remark on the note, page 30, as I have been advised, even by a friend, to suppress that note altogether. But, on mature reflection, I do not think it expedient; besides, (being on stereotype,) it is not altogether convenient. It states a fact, which when properly understood, I have no wish to conceal or suppress. Please to alter the tense a little, however, and read, "I have occasionally inserted,"—"on which I might have retreated,"—"should I have felt a disposition to do so." The first part of the note alludes to the time I commenced the review: the latter, to the time I put the work to the press. I contend that every man, who has any faith at all, has the privilege of maintaining and defending his belief, and is a consistent believer, notwithstanding his doubts, until his doubts overbalance his belief; but to maintain his profession of belief after that, i. e. after his doubts are stronger than his belief, and probability, in his mind, is on the other side of the question, would be dishonest—would be *hypocrisy!* A. K.

*New-York, June 1, 1830.*

EXTRACT FROM

WYTTENBACH'S OPUSCULA.

[THE following *extract* is prefixed to this REVIEW, as having an immediate bearing on the EVIDENCES of christianity. According to the New Testament, both Jesus and his apostles constantly appealed to the Old Testament, as being of divine authority. But what confidence can be placed in the *ancient* writings of a people so insignificant and obscure as to be, as it were, totally unknown to other nations, till at least a *century* after all the facts, real or pretended, therein recorded, were said to have been written? Who ever knew any thing about King David, or King Solomon, and the splendid temple built at Jerusalem by the latter, except the Jews? Even in the historical facts, much allowance should be made for exaggeration—it is natural for all nations to wish to be thought *somebody*; and every thing bordering on the marvellous should be rejected.\*]

*Extract on the ancient notices of the Jewish nation, previous to the time of Alexander the Great; from Daniel Wytttenbach's Opuscula, Vol. II. p. 416. Amsterdam, 1821. De unitate Dei.*

But there were (it is said) many wise men among the Egyptians and Phenicians, who judged of divine things more accurately than the common people. I know it. And

\* The reader is referred to a work, entitled, "The Fabrication of the Pentateuch PROVED, by the *Anachronisms* contained in those books. By a learned and eminent Writer." This learned and eminent writer, is no less than the author of the *Essays* embodied in the following work.

these wise men it is also said, received their knowledge of the one God from the Jews, and transmitted it to the Greeks. Of this I have no proof. Men, naturally of capacity so good, as to understand and despise the popular errors, might with the same capacity easily comprehend, what nature has certainly not placed among her recondite truths; that the divine power was rather concentrated in one deity, than divided among many. This may be affirmed of the wise men of Greece, as well as those of Egypt and Phenicia. Unless we deem them inferior in natural talent to many men of the middle ages, who could not assent to the errors of established theology however consecrated by authority.

But I will undertake to show, that *the Jews first came into notice among the Greeks, after the time of Alexander the Great; and that the historical monuments preceding that period make not the slightest mention of any Jewish transaction.* Many of the Greeks, their chief men for learning and talent, Thales, Solon, Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato, led by the love of wisdom, visited remote countries, as Egypt, Phenicia, and Babylon. How happens it that the writings of these eminent men, the accounts transmitted to us of their sayings and doings, contain no mention of the Jews whatever? The times of Thales, Solon, and Pythagoras, are coincident with the re-instatement of the Jews after the Babylonish captivity. At that period, Cyrus subdued Croesus and the Lydians; transactions which were nearly connected with the affairs of Greece; so that it is hardly possible the deeds and expeditions of Cyrus should have been unknown to the Greeks, especially to their sages who travelled over that part of Asia. If therefore, at that period, the Jews had any name or reputation among other nations, would not Solon and the other wise men whom we have mentioned, inflamed as they were

with the love of letters, have visited Judea, as well as Egypt and Chaldea? Would not Homer, the cotemporary of Solomon, the most famous among the Jewish kings for wisdom and knowledge—would not Homer, the most learned of poets, who had collected by travelling so much knowledge of foreign and remote nations, and who has noticed in his poems so many things that fell under his own observation, or which were told him by others—who not unfrequently mentions the Egyptians and Phenicians; would not he notice the Jewish people? Yet he mentions nothing whatever concerning the Jews. Those who believe in the personal meeting of Pythagoras and Ezechiel, commit a shameful chronological error; and bring together persons separated by many years: others believe that Plato acquired a knowledge of the trinity from the sacred books of the Old Testament: but nothing can be more silly than this attempt to trace Grecian learning from Judea; and those who know the least of the subject, are the most hardy in their assertions.

Let us dismiss the poets, most of whom abound in learning, and show it in their writings; but none of whom furnish the least trace of evidence respecting the Jews. Let us dismiss the followers of that day, of whom the writings of Aristotle and Plato, the chief of them, have reached our times: is there one Jewish notice to be found in any part of them? Yet Plato travelled into Egypt for the sake of knowledge. Aristotle also, so well versed in the history of the times, so enquiring, who had not only Alexander himself as his correspondent but those also who were companions of Alexander's expedition, and who communicated to him whatever was worthy of notice in foreign countries and among foreign nations. If therefore any of them had visited the Jews, or considered that nation who worshipped one God only, as a circum-



stance new and proper to be related, would not some of them have communicated this fact to Aristotle? There was room enough to notice the Jews, in the works of that philosopher who has described the public transactions of the Greeks, and of other nations. But there is no mention of the Jews in any part of the works of Aristotle that have come down to us, or in the fragments of, such as have been lost.

Let us review the historians, who have touched upon the public affairs of the Egyptians, Persians, and other nations connected with them. Out of a great number, two only, but of great repute, have descended to us, Herodotus and Xenophon. The former carefully travelled over these countries, and diligently mentions whatever he had observed personally, or had heard from others. The other in the course of his military expedition was well acquainted with Persia, and that part of Asia, which was in the immediate vicinity of Judea: which of these historians, has made any mention of the Jews? We may make the same enquiry as to Ctesias, Eudoxus, and others, whose works are lost. Of the truth of this remark, one argument, and that conclusive, is, that Josephus, and after Josephus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Eusebius, and the other ancient fathers, who have anxiously collected from the Greek writers whatever testimonies are extant concerning the Jews, have not been able to adduce one passage authentic or worthy of credit. I shall speak again of this, after having noticed the writers of the age of Alexander. For my former suggestion that the Jews were first noticed by the Greeks after that period, has not the same force as if the Jews suddenly at that time acquired a name among the Greeks. So in fact it was. For slight and obscure was the knowledge of the Jews among the Greeks, until their country was frequently visited in

consequence of the wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ, and colonies were transported into Egypt and Syria.

All the historians of the transactions of Alexander who are worthy of any credit, are totally silent as to the Jews. Yet this was the time and the occasion, when the Greeks might have put an end to their long ignorance, and acquired some knowledge of that people. Alexander, having taken Syria, and sacked Tyre, went toward Egypt. He passed through Palestine, whose city Gaza, garrisoned by the Persians, alone made any opposition to his progress. Therefore *having passed through Judea*, and having been retarded in his passage by the necessity of taking Gaza, so little did he think of the Jews, that his thoughts were exclusively occupied by the capture of Gaza, and his intended occupation of Egypt. For as to the story related by Josephus, and those who copied him, of the visit of Alexander to Jerusalem, it can easily be shewn to be a Jewish fabrication, in consequence of the chagrin of the Jews that no mention is made of them. This is acknowledged by all the best critics on history, and in particular it has been demonstrated by the diligence of the Marquis de St. Croix, in his *Examen critique des historiens d'Alexandre le grand*, p. 68, et seq.; et not. 13. It must be strange to every body but a Jew, that no mention is made of that nation by the writers who have recorded the transactions of Alexander the Great, when the barbarous and before unheard of names of the Dahæ, Aspîi, Malli, Sabracæ, Arachosii, are met with! The Jews, it may be said, voluntarily submitted to Alexander, that no force might be used against them; nor did he do any thing that his historians thought it necessary to relate in this respect. Yet, the same historians do not pass over in silence the other nations who submitted; but speak of their character,

manners, and history. The truth is, there was no occasion given to speak of the Jews in the histories of Alexander. Yet he had as his companions in arms, not a few learned and philosophic men, who whatever they might have known concerning the Jews, do not appear to have communicated it to Aristotle or any other philosopher of that day. Since then, I appear to have in support of this opinion, the strong argument, that Josephus could adduce no authentic and credible passage when he wished to shew that the Jews were known to the Greeks; let us examine its value somewhat more minutely.

Apion, the grammarian, had asserted the recent appearance of the Jews, alleging that their very name was recent and unheard of among other nations; nor had many centuries passed since the ignorance of the existence of the Jews was general. Josephus undertook to refute this calumny in two books; and a great part of his observations are levelled at the negligence, and the recent standing of the Greeks themselves; and in collecting passages from the Greek writers, wherein the Jews were mentioned. It is not my business here, to discuss whether he had reason to complain of the recent standing and the negligence of the Greeks. But thus the fact is; if faith be given to the evidence of the writers cited for this purpose by Josephus, he proves nothing, unless some Greek prior to the time of Alexander, had received some slight and obscure knowledge of the Jews, and this knowledge had been brought home to the Greeks, *after* the Jewish territory had been much frequented during the wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ. His evidences are such as may be well contested.

And first, he mentions l. 22. that *Pythagoras* took many of his institutions and doctrines from the Jews. But as no writing of *Pythagoras* is extant, by which this can

be proved, he cites Hermippus, a celebrated author of the history of philosophy, but long after Alexander. See Vossius de hist. Græc. I. 16. What says Hermippus? "Pythagoras imitated the opinions of the Jews, and the Thracians." Now this is a conjecture of Hermippus, who had some knowledge of the Jews, rather than a fact drawn from the works of writers, who lived near the time of Pythagoras, or previous to Alexander. For among these writers, no mention whatever is made of the Jews. Nor does Hermippus say that Pythagoras himself was ever among the Jews. Had he made such an assertion, it would surely have been brought forward by Josephus instead of relying on a doubtful and obscure passage. Hermippus had opportunity enough of saying this had it been true, since he occupied several books with the life and doctrines of Pythagoras.

On this authority do all the ancient fathers rely, who contend that Pythagoras had visited Judea. So, Origen against Celsus, I. 15, 16, was deceived in this respect, thinking that the passage of Hermippus lauded by Josephus, was taken from the first book *Peri ton Pythagoron biblion*. As Hermippus joins the Thracians with the Jews, and insinuates that their doctrines were similar, why might not the Greeks learn the unity of God from the Thracians their neighbours, whom they knew, rather than from the obscure and unnoticed Jews, whom they knew not; if indeed the Greeks were incapable of discovering this truth by their own ingenuity? For, as Herodotus tells us, IV. 94, Zamolxis was worshipped as the deity of the Thracians, by some horrid kind of sacrifice. The common opinion among them was, that the soul, after the death of the body, returned to God; nor did they believe that the Jupiter who sent lightning and thunder from the

skies was God: yet they held that there was no other Zamolxis whom they worshipped.

A few words more as to Pythagoras. There are two Greek writers who are of opinion that he was acquainted with the Jews: Hermippus, of whom I have already spoken, and Porphyry in his life of Pythagoras, ch. 16. "They say, that Pythagoras visited the Egyptians, Arabians, Chaldeans, and Hebrews." But the passage is of dubious authority; for Cyrill, in his reply to Julian X. p. 340, cites this very passage, omitting the words *kai Ebraious*, [and Hebrews,] which the fathers who praise the Jews at the expense of the Greeks *insert!* add also that the word *phesin* "they say" shews that Porphyry referred to that story-teller Diogenes, whose books *Peri ton uper thoulén apiston*, were reviewed by Photius in his *Bibliotheca Cod.* 166, p. 184, et seq.

Josephus afterwards praises *Theophrastus*, who says that the Tyrians had the oath called Corban; as having named the Tyrians for or in lieu of the Jews. But if it be true, as Josephus asserts, that the Jews alone had that oath in use, it follows that very little indeed was known of the Jews, if Theophrastus could mistake them for Tyrians. Nor do I see any improbability in the Tyrians using the same oath by the same name. But what is most extraordinary is, that Josephus should refer to this obscure passage in Theophrastus, and omit a plainer one, which Eusebius has noted in his *Præp. Evang.* IX. 2, citing an oration of Porphyry de Abstin. II. 26, as if the passage were taken from Theophrastus. The passage is thus corrupted in Porphyry: *Kaitoi Suron men Ioudaiot dia ten ex arches tháision eti kai nun phesin o Theophrastos zoothutoun ei ton auten (tropon) emas keleuoién thuein apostaiemen an tes prazeos*; neither is the reading more satisfactory in Eusebius. If therefore any one should assert that the mention

of Theophrastus is inserted there from any other book, he will assert that which is improbable; especially as it is omitted by Josephus, who anxiously searched for traces of the Jews among other authors. But let it be granted that Theophrastus does mention the Jews; he speaks of them as if his knowledge of them was very slight, and by no means proposes them as examples to be imitated.

The third author mentioned by Josephus, is *Herodotus*, II. 104, where he speaks of circumcision, "the Phenicians and the Syrians of Palestine acknowledge that they imitated the Egyptians in this respect: but the Syrians who dwell near the rivers Thermodon and Parthenion, and the Macrones, their neighbors, are said to have recently borrowed this rite from Colchis." To this passage Josephus adds his own opinion, viz. "that of the inhabitants of Palestine, the Jews were the only people who used circumcision." But the Syrians of Palestine, are not called *Jews* by Herodotus: they were the inhabitants of the sea coast from Tyre to Egypt, as Wesseling ad. h. l. et III. 4, has well observed, who adds, "I cannot discover that Herodotus had any familiar knowledge of the Jews. He did not neglect the Phenicians or the Syrians of Palestine; and he notices those who had possession of the sea coast, as the Philistines; but it is not likely that they practised the ceremony of circumcision."

That Herodotus meant the Jews by his expressions above mentioned, is quite improbable; for he appears to have been ignorant of their name, and notices the rite of circumcision as something worthy of remark.

Fourthly, *Chærilus* is brought forward; who places among the nations accompanying Xerxes in his expedition, a cohort which he thus describes. "A strange ~~kind~~ of people followed the camp, who spake the Phenician language with an unknown accent. They inhabit the

mountains of Solyma near a vast lake." Josephus is greatly mistaken when he applies this to the Jews and the lake Asphaltites. 'The *montes Solymi*, are mentioned by poets and historians as being situated in Lycia. Homer locates them beyond the ocean; this Strabo l. p. 39, explains : and if any one will take the trouble of comparing his explanation with these verses, he will not hesitate to allow that Chærilus alluded to the *Solymi montes* in Lycia ; and means to describe their situation in conformity with Homer. But it is unnecessary for me to say any more after the remarks of such men as Scaliger and Bochart, who receive the praises of the editor of Josephus in his notes.

Josephus goes on to other authors, from whom he pretends to show, not only that the Jews were known to other nations, but received from them praises for their wisdom. For this purpose *Aristotle* is cited ! A great author no doubt. In what book, I ask, in what passage ? By Clearchus truly, who introduces him in a dialogue speaking of some wise men, a Jew, of his nation and country. Indeed it is very unlikely that Clearchus should be the author of that passage, as John Jonsius (*de Scriptoribus Hist. Phil. l. 18*) very learnedly shows. At any rate, it is a rash imputation to Aristotle himself, of that which Clearchus *feigned in the way of dialogue* ; and which was never written or spoken by Aristotle. But the fathers of the church, according to their usual practice, follow Josephus in this quotation also ; and every where boast that the wisdom of the Jews had been praised by Aristotle. Even many recent authors rashly use this authority. How well skilled they were in historical criticism will appear from this, that the same compositions make Aristotle himself to have been a Jew ! For it is hardly credible, though true, that a learned man like Marcellus Ticinus

(de Christ. Relig. cap. 26) should publish this passage. "Clearchus, a peripatetic, writes that Aristotle was a Jew !" Carelessness was the source of this shameful mistake, for he misunderstood the Latin version of Josephus, and corrupted it by a false punctuation. The Greek runs thus, "*and this man (says Aristotle) was a Jew:*" Ticinus reads it, *and, says he, Aristotle was a Jew.* See Jonsius, I. c. p. 116. Palestine, indeed, and the Dead Sea, as Jonsius observes, are mentioned by Aristotle in his Meteorology, II. 3, but the Jews are mentioned no where in the works of Aristotle.

All the other authors cited by Josephus, *are subsequent to the time of Alexander* ; and therefore require little notice on my part. He ascribes much to Hecataeus, who greatly praises the Jews. He is grievously offended with Hieronymus, who although he was Quæstor in Syria, and remained a long time in those parts, he does not speak one word about the Jews ; notwithstanding he was a learned man, and an historian of Alexander's successors ; a portion of history in which the Jews might have been introduced with great propriety. A crowd of authors follow, who have mentioned the Jews incidentally ; of these authors the names only are mentioned, the passages are not quoted ; Theophilus, Mnaseas, Aristophanes, Eumerus, Hermogenes, Conon, Zopyrion : for I have not searched (says he) in all the books. Of these, some are written after the time of Alexander ; others are so entirely unknown, that oblivion would have seized upon their names, had they not been rescued by Josephus. If he could have gained any credit to his nation from the testimonies which these authors might have furnished, he would have used them for this purpose, *as he did others* of a very obscure and dubious character. The authors who have written on the affairs of Phenicia, Dius, Me-



nander, are of uncertain authority. Nor does Manetho say any thing that certainly relates to the Jews. Finally, (II. 16) when he attempts to show that Moses was superior to the Greek philosophers, he adds, "Moses and the wise men of Greece held the same sentiments as to the divine nature ; which they learned from Moses." Afterwards, explaining the Jewish notions of the divine nature, he uses the orphic language, God first, God middle, &c., *cet. adumbr. conf. II. 22.*

If then Josephus, a learned man and a Jew, sedulously bent upon this question, that he might vindicate for his nation antiquity and celebrity with other nations, could make out nothing to the purpose, why should I dwell on the ecclesiastical fathers, not unlearned indeed, but in this respect independent of the authority of Josephus ? If Josephus be compared with the writers who succeeded him in the same course of investigation, he well deserves the praise of modesty. He merely assumes that the Jewish name and reputation was not confined to the Jewish nation, but was known to other and foreign nations. His authority to this point would have been confirmed, if reliance could be placed on his arguments and citations. But they prove nothing in support of his position, that the name, the religion, and the rites of the Jews were generally known abroad. The ecclesiastical fathers, without adducing any arguments or authorities of their own, rest upon Josephus ; and assert roundly that the Greeks borrowed their notions of God from the Jews. More modern ecclesiastical authors, without knowing any reason for their position, defend it equally as if it were self-evident. Hence, rashness of judgment keeps pace with ignorance. Hence the source of those errors, by which many not unlearned men have been deceived ; which would not have

been the case, had they applied more diligence in the examination.

My object in this investigation has been, not to bring the Jewish nation into contempt, as some have endeavored ; but simply to show, that either no knowledge, or knowledge very slight of the Jewish nation, existed among other nations foreign to them, previous to the time of Alexander the Great. Let us now quit this digression, &c., &c., p. 421.\*

Here ends the extract from the learned Wyttenbach. Let the clergy refute it if they can. And if they cannot, will they still place confidence in the (probably) forged writings of such a people ? will they still continue to quote them as something of more than human authority ? If so, who will they have for their hearers ? for before an enlightened and well informed audience, they must certainly appear very foolish. Or will they still try to defend the wisdom of God in making use of such an obscure people through whom to make known all his early and *gracious* promises to a dying world ? *Credat Judæus Appella : non ego.*

\* Alexander the Great died 323 years before the birth of Christ, aged 33 years.

Theophrastus died about 388 years before the birth of Christ, aged 85.

Aristotle died 322 years before the birth of Christ, aged 63.

Pythagoras died 497 years before the birth of Christ, aged 71.

Ezekiel, the prophet, flourished about 593 years before the birth of Christ.

Plato died 348 years before the birth of Christ, aged 81.

Manetho is supposed to have written 261 years before the birth of Christ.

The Jews first became known under Ptolemy Lagus, who overran that coast of the Mediterranean ; and when the rage for making collections of books and literature took place, at the new built city of Alexandria. Previous to the collection of Jewish and Chaldean tracts then made, and translated by the Jew translators of the Septuagint, no mention can be found in any ancient author of any of the books in the collection now called the

old testament, or of any of the facts related in them. If any ancient author of credit or respectability has mentioned, or cited, or referred to them, who is he, and where is the passage? They come to us absolutely unaccredited, in any way known to history. The Jews were a wandering tribe of Bedouin Arabs, who got possession of the sterile country contained within two degrees of north latitude, viz. from 31 to 33, and two degrees of east longitude, (from Greenwich) viz. 35 to 37. Of this they did not occupy the more fertile parts on the sea coast, but the interior and sterile portion only. Their territory, if any they had, does not appear to have been at any time larger than the little state of Delaware, and certainly not containing more good land. None of the pieces composing the old testament could have been known, till these slaves learned a little reading and writing in Babylon. After all, who will answer this question—Where is the authority for them? Upon what evidence anterior to Ptolemy Philadelphus, or about 250 years before the birth of Christ, does the authenticity of these books rest? Are the compilers employed by that monarch, (none of them known to the learned world,) authority for facts related as having happened a thousand years before?

**A REVIEW**

**OF THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY ;**

**IN A SERIES OF LECTURES, &c.**

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**LECTURE I.**

“Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thess. v. 21.

A **most** excellent recommendation : and I shall endeavor to obey the injunction of the apostle. In Griesbach this verse is connected with the two preceding, which literally read thus : “ The Spirit quench not : prophesyings despise not : but all things explore, [prove or examine] the good hold fast.” But to obey this injunction, we must march into the enemy’s camp ; we must storm his strong holds, and throw open the brazen gates of his citadel.

We shall not wage war with either Christ or Christianity, so far as either has truth for its foundation. With that religion which is “ the way, the truth, and the life,” we shall not wage war ; but we shall pay no respect to names, abstractly from the thing named ; and therefore we shall pay no respect to the mere *name* of Christianity, any farther than we find it has truth for its basis ; but shall treat it in the same light as all other dogmas. Let ignorance and superstition, bigotry and intolerance, be each at his post ; for it is with these, and these alone, we ~~wage~~ wage war.

Having declared myself independent of all ecclesiastical establishments, I shall change my usual style of speaking, (and, of course, of writing,) and use the first person singular, instead of the third, or the first person plural, in relation to myself, as I do not wish to make others responsible for any sentiments, or any facts, advanced by me. No one, I will venture to say, has been more sincerely devoted to the truth, has studied more arduously, or more faithfully, in order to find it, or has been more honest in making his discoveries known to the world, than the individual who now stands before you. But, so it is, whether it must be considered my misfortune or not, just in proportion as I have made myself acquainted with real science—with nature and her laws, if laws they may be called—I have had my doubts as to the truth of many things recorded in the Bible, not only in the old, but also in the new testament.

These doubts, on fundamental doctrines, first commenced on reading Dr. Priestley's *Disquisition on Matter and Spirit*, in the summer of 1816, which occasioned my letters of correspondence with the Rev. Hosea Ballou, now of Boston, (Mass.) which have since been published. These letters of Mr. B. served to quiet my doubts, at the time, though not fully to remove them.

In the autumn of 1818, I delivered my *Lectures on the Doctrine of Universal Benevolence*, two editions of which have been published in Philadelphia, (Penn.) of a thousand copies each, and but few of the last edition are now remaining on hand. To prepare these lectures, led me to study the Hebrew, of which, until then, I had no knowledge whatever. This study was pursued, what leisure time I could spare, for more than seven years; during which time I made myself acquainted with various versions of the scriptures, (more than twenty of the new tes-

ment,) and in several different languages, until I was satisfied that I had attained to all the knowledge attainable, which was worth knowing, or which could be attained from those sources. My mind still remained dissatisfied. For, notwithstanding the balance of proof in favor of the doctrine of universal salvation—that all shall be made alive, gathered together, reheaded, reconciled in Christ, are abundant, (though it must be confessed, or at least it is true, whether acknowledged or not, that there are some texts which will admit of a different construction,) yet, the question would come up, “How do we know that the scriptures themselves are true?” The various disputes among christians of different denominations never touch this question; as all denominations take it for granted that the scriptures are true; and, therefore, not one out of a hundred, perhaps, even of the clergy, much less of the laity, ever examine this question. Yea, it is more likely to be faithfully and impartially examined by some of the laity, who have leisure, and possess the means, than by the clergy. The whole combined interest of the clergy, so far as their occupation is concerned, is against such an examination. It has often been said, and I have made use of the same argument myself, that christianity should not be discarded until something better can be proposed in its stead. To which I answer, truth is better than falsehood, let it be what it may. Therefore, however temporary, momentary, or transitory, all truth may be in relation to us, yet, being *true*, it is infinitely better than the most sublime, or the most brilliant airy castles which have nothing better than the visionary dreams of fanaticism for their support.

Whatever prophecies there have been made and recorded, whatever miracles there have been wrought in former times, these things *now* rest entirely on human

testimony. Prophecies have long since ceased ; miracles are no longer performed ; and we have nothing but historical evidence that either the one or the other ever took place. All the pretended prophecies, which have any thing like the appearance of a fulfilment,\* might have been written long after the facts predicted had taken place, for aught we know, or for aught that appears to the contrary ; and the miracles recorded in the Bible, stand on the same evidence, though not so well attested, as some, at least, out of the many miracles mentioned in fabulous history. What do we know of the ancient Jews, except from history ? and what history, except their own, gives us any account of them, so far back as the days of their prophets ? If such an extraordinary people existed as the Bible gives us an account of, is it not strange that they should have been unknown to all the other nations in the then civilized world ? and if they were known, is it not still more strange, that no writer, not even Herodotus or Xenophon, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Solon, Plato, nor any of the historians of Alexander the Great, should have made mention of them ? Yet we are told by Wyttenbach, in his *Opuscula*, *De unitate Dei*, vol. II. p. 416—431, as published in the *Correspondent*, vol. V. p. 129 and on, (and also prefixed to these lectures,) that none of these writers have made mention of the Jews, in any of their works which have come down to us. Yea, more, that Josephus, in his day, notwithstanding he wrote two books on the subject, could not find a single writer who had spoken of the Jews prior to the days of Alexander. All the Jewish records, therefore, which are now considered canonical, even by the Jews themselves, come from a people totally unknown in the annals of history, inhabiting the interior

\* Except a few conditional prophecies which, like the ancient oracles, will answer to one event about as well as another.

and sterile part of Palestine, not larger than the little state of Delaware. Yet to this people, as both Jews and christians believe, was made known the will of the supreme Jehovah; and among this people, was retained the only oracles of God which existed at that time, as acknowledged by christians themselves, and on which the Jews, even to this day, place their only hopes of salvation! On such histories what dependence is to be placed? There is so much fable mixed with the true histories, if any reliance can be placed on them at all, that it renders the whole, as a whole, of but very little value.

But, if the facts in the christian scriptures can be substantiated, we need give ourselves but little trouble or concern about the Jewish records. But the New Testament has no more claim to divine authority than the old, unless the facts can first be substantiated on the ground of history. Till then, the facts must be examined on the same ground, and tested by the same process, as all other historical facts; and in no part is the truth of them to be taken for granted, merely because they claim to be of divine origin. Let the supposed supernatural facts be first proved as matters of fact, and then, (as I do not believe in a supernatural devil, otherwise supernatural facts themselves would be no proof,) but not till then, I am willing to yield my assent to them as to their divinity, and of course, as to their divine authority; but without this, they have no more claim to divinity, than any thing and every thing else. But if the devil has the power of working miracles, as some suppose, and as the Bible seems to admit, then, even miracles are no proof of the divinity of any thing.

In these lectures I shall draw largely from a series of essays, from an anonymous writer, yet one known to be of high literary and moral standing, as published in the Correspondent, vol. v. signed "Philo Veritas;" presuming



that this writer, as he has seen fit to make his essays public property, will not be displeased that by this means the knowledge of them is made still more extensive. I do this, because they furnish me with the knowledge of some very important facts, which I did not before possess, and they refer to authorities to which I have no access ; and also, because I like the arrangement, and even where I have the authorities, I may as well avail myself of these arguments as otherwise ; for, should I attempt any of my own, they would not be better expressed. A review of these essays, therefore, may properly be called " A Review of the Evidences of Christianity."

"Nothing is wanting to set truth on a firm basis, but public attention to public discussion."\* The clergy, however, if they ever attempt to state the objections to the truth of what is alleged in favor of christianity, never state the strongest objections, nor even any in their fullest force. Hence, people who hear or read on one side of the question only, have but a very poor chance to judge as to the real state of the argument. Let the objections then be fairly stated ; let them find access to all ears, or let them meet every eye, and if the clergy can answer these objections let them ; if they cannot, let them acknowledge it. I am aware that but a very few, comparatively, have given themselves the trouble, and perhaps they have not the means, to examine even the " common defences." But it is time, as well as the duty of the clergy, to pay more attention to this subject : for, "if," says our essayist, "when they see the objections of christianity staring them

\* I shall mark the extracts from the essays in this lecture with quotations, without any further reference ; and, where I have given the substance only, I shall not even do that, as the one general acknowledgment above is considered sufficient, and will be satisfactory both to the author of the Essays as well as the editor of the Correspondent.

in the face—exposed to the gaze of the public—calling on them to defend the system they preach—if, when they see and know the difficulties attending their doctrine, they pass them by as unworthy of their notice, they are either impudent and unprincipled swindlers, taking money under false pretences, and neglecting their most imperious duty; or they profess themselves, unblushingly, the careless, hired, prostituted advocates of an indefensible imposture; and they get their living by the public profession of known falsehood, defended, on their part, because it conforms to the prejudices which, from a misconducted education, their hearers have imbibed. It is a base and dishonest vocation, thus to obtain ease and luxury; and” it is believed that “a great majority of them know it. Is it not high time,” therefore, “that the people who pay them should know it too? This may be harsh language, but I do not acknowledge the claims set up by fraud and falsehood to be treated with respect.”\*

I propose therefore, in these lectures—

1. “To investigate the obvious, and common sense rules for judging of human testimony; particularly the plain canons of criticism relating to the evidence of history.

2. “To investigate the evidence on which christianity exists, as founded on the passages in Pliny, Tacitus, and Suetonius; the forgeries in Josephus and Longinus have had their day.

3. “To investigate whether there be any, and what evidence, for the authenticity of our present gospels over cotemporary and acknowledged forgeries.

\* As harsh as this language may seem, it comes from a person whom the learned, both as a literary and moral man, dare not treat otherwise than with all due respect; and I presume that the time is not far distant when his name may and will be given to the public.

4. "To show the general character of the ancient fathers of the christian church, on whose evidence, the authenticity of the four gospels now adopted, mainly rests.

5. "To enquire how far that evidence is binding on the men of the present day.

6. "To compare in a general way, the value of religion, with the evils that arise from the abuse of it: and to enquire, whether religion," distinct from morality, in which case it is only another name for morality, "be of any use whatever, in a social community; and, whether prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, when addressed to what is called God, or the supreme being," if it be designed to move him, or persuade him to do what he otherwise would not be disposed to perform, "be not mere folly and absurdity."\*

Nothing new, therefore, must be expected in these lectures; for what can there be offered new on this subject: yet, since many religionists, and particularly the clergy, are not willing to allow honest *scepticism* in relation to the scriptures; since the deist, the atheist, the infidel, and all others who do not bow down to the golden image of orthodoxy, which the clergy have set up, are abused more or less every Sunday, in almost every place of worship throughout the whole land: it behoves honest men, who are opposed to the supremacy of one class of men, domineering over the minds and consciences of their fellows, and who are in favor of maintaining and defending not only the civil, but also the religious rights of the people—that of free discussion; and who maintain that each

\* It will be perceived that I occasionally insert a few words, not only with a view of softening the language a little, in some places, but also as a kind of stepping-stone, on which I might retreat, should I feel disposed to do so. The caution was perhaps a prudent one, but it was unnecessary; I have now not the least conceivable inclination to return. How few there are who know what it is to be mentally free!

and every individual has an unalienable right to think for himself, and to speak his own thoughts, to be equally on the alert ; and to be “urgent with facts and arguments which the clergy are bound to reply to ; and which, they cunningly treat with apparent contempt, not because these facts and arguments are easily answered, but because the hired advocates of imposture know them to be unanswerable.”

Having thus laid out the work which lays before me, the audience may begin to grow impatient to hear the facts and arguments to which I have alluded ; but I must beg the patience of the hearer. A work once well done, is done for always, and is better than to be attempted, but miserably balked, a thousand times. I have some desultory matter to dispose of, in order to pave the way, and prepare the mind for the reception of what is to come, and therefore, shall not fairly commence the series in this lecture, which is rather designed as an introduction than otherwise, except the heads which I have stated above, and which I shall bring forward again in their due order.

“I have been meditating,” says my learned author, “on the general practice, adopted, and defended by the most learned among the christian fathers, the practice known by the name of *economia*,” i. e. *management* or, in plain English, “the practice of forging and lying for the purpose of promoting the common cause. We can fix this by direct evidence, on Origen, Jerom, Eusebius, Chrysostom ; and so far as the citation of books as genuine, now known and acknowledged by all the orthodox to be forgeries, extends, we can fix it on almost every one of the drivellers of the second century—men whom Evanson very appropriately speaks of, as the ancient *mothers*, the *old women* of the church. Even Dr. Priestley, devoted as he was to his own scheme of unitarian christianity, could

not help, after Mosheim, lamenting this roguish propensity which is so manifest a blemish in the main props and pillars of the christian edifice.\* What credit is that man entitled to, who justifies and practices falsehood and forgery whenever it is likely to serve his purpose? This practice, however, is not without defence from the scriptural example; as the following texts will show." It is true, the children of Israel were forbidden to bear false witness against their neighbor, that is, against each other; yet, nevertheless, examples of lying, justifying the practice from high authority, abound in the scriptures. Thus—

Num. xiv. 30, 34. "Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, *concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein*, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh; and Joshua the son of Nun. \* \* \* After the number of the days in which ye searched for the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years; *and ye shall know my breach of promise.*"

Now if God has broken his promise, and even his *oath*, once, what confidence can be placed in him? What stronger evidence have we of the salvation of all men, or even of any man, than the promise, the oath of the Almighty? "Look unto me, and be ye saved—I have sworn by myself—unto me every tongue shall swear—in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." &c. Isa. xlv. 22—25. But what confidence can be placed in it? "*Ye shall know my breach of promise!*" Let no one imagine or believe that God has ever said this; but rather that some man has said it for him. God is "not a man that he should lie!"

1 Kings, xxii. 22, 23. "I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his (Ahab's) prophets. And he (the Lord)

\* See Disquisition on Matter and Spirit, vol. 1, page 393, note; Mosheim's Dissertation, pages 247, 248.

said, go and do so." Do how? Why, go and lie to Ahab! "Now therefore, behold the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets." Can any one wonder then that Ahab's prophets were liars? And how do we know but that the same god is now performing the same lying wonders? If so, we must not marvel that there are so many false prophets and false teachers in the world. All the false tales swarming in orthodox tracts, may, perhaps, come from the same source.

Jer. xx. 7. "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I am greatly deceived." Jer. xv. 8. "Wilt thou be altogether to me as a liar, as waters that fail?" Ezek. xiv. 9. "If a prophet is deceived, I the Lord deceived that prophet; and I will stretch out my hand, and destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." Might not one well ask here, why, what evil hath he done? Will God destroy any man for being simply what he has made him to be? or, in other words, will God punish his creature for a fault of which he himself was the efficient cause? Far be it from me to have such a thought concerning my maker.

2 Thess. ii. 11. "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they might believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth." This looks to me something like God hardening the heart of Pharaoh, and then punishing not only him, but all the Egyptians, merely because their king did not still possess a soft heart, after the Almighty had hardened it. I am aware that it is also said, that Pharaoh hardened his own heart; but it is not at all inconsistent with a system which requires lying for its support, to impute the same effect to two distinct and different causes!

Paul the apostle, on the whole, I believe was not so exceptional a character as some have supposed, or else he would not have recommended so many good things; and,

considering the day in which he lived, I am rather surprised that we do not find more, instead of less, prevarication in his life and conduct. If it be said that he gave contradictory accounts of the circumstances of his own conversion; this might have been the fault of his biographer rather than his own: I cannot charge him with *lying* when he says that he was called in question for the resurrection of the dead, though no such charge appears against him on record; yet Paul might have supposed that this was the real cause of the Jewish enmity; for the doctrine of the resurrection that Paul preached, basing it on the resurrection of Jesus, was very different from that which was allowed by the Jews; even the Pharisees, any more than the Sadducees, had no such idea whatever; much less can I make out that he defended "lying on system," as he has been charged: yet, if he was understood, *then*, as some are disposed to understand him *now*, we may truly say, "no wonder the ancient fathers were led away by his example." The passage brought to prove the above charge, is, Rom. iii. 7. "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my *lie* unto his glory, why yet am I also judged a sinner?" Here, it is supposed, Paul justified *lying*, for the glory of God. But this is not, as I conceive, a doctrine, or system, defended by the apostle; but only an objection put into the mouth of his opponent, and which is here stated, merely for the sake of refuting it; for he goes on farther to say, ver. 8. "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation [condemnation] is just." That this doctrine was taught in the world, in the apostle's day, and practised long afterwards, (and I am not certain that people have yet wholly laid aside the *practice*, though I think no one, now, would have the hardihood to contend for the princi-

ple,) I am very ready to admit; and that some, not fully understanding the apostle, nor comprehending his doctrine, might charge him with defending the system of lying, for the cause of God, is equally true; for he says, we be *slanderosly reported*—"Let us do evil that good may come." But he repels the charge with indignation. Rom. vi. 1, 2. "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" That Paul sometimes worked upon the good feelings of his fellow-men, in a way that they did not fully see his motives at the time, with a view to do them good, is very possible; nor do I think it so very reprehensible if he did. For if he overcame them by his kindness, by not making himself burdensome to those whom he wished to enlighten and instruct, was there any thing wrong in that? As he says, 2 Cor. xii. 16, "Be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile." Let the clergy follow this example, if they choose, and not be burdensome to their hearers; but win as many as they can with their kindness; I have no objection. But when Paul goes so far as to curse all who should preach any other gospel save his own, I cannot go with him. See Gal. i. 8, 9. For the credit of the apostle, I should be glad to see it proved that either this is an interpolation, or else (as in the days of pious fraud, they forged some whole books) that this epistle is actually forged.\*

Some would go so far as to charge this practice of prevarication, amounting to nearly falsehood, to Jesus himself. But I see, or think I see, so much good, so much to be admired in that character, that so far as these things can apparently be made out, I would rather impute them to

\* See also Rom. ii. 16. What gospel did Paul mean by "my gospel," before any of the gospels were written?



his ignorant biographers, who may have misrepresented his character in these particulars, than to that worthy name I have been so long taught to revere, and have looked up to for an example. He says, John vii. 8. "Go ye up to this feast; I go not up," &c. Here, it is said, "Aware of the direct falsehood that would otherwise be manifest;" for Jesus afterwards went up, not openly, but as it were in secret; "the clergy have taken care to foist in the word *oupo* instead of *ouk*. The true reading is, I shall not go up unto this feast. The latest, the most learned, the most approved of the editors of the New Testament, *Griesbach*, has settled this question, not to be stirred again. He has ascertained the authenticity of *ouk*, and adopted it; and rejected *oupo*; instead of *oupo anabaino*, it is *ouk anabesomai*, I shall not go." All the editions of *Griesbach* which I have seen, however, is *ouk anabaino*, I go not; which may very well admit of *now*, *now*, or *at present*, being understood, and therefore I have rendered the passage, "I am not going up to this festival, *at present*; for my time is not yet fully come." But construe the passage as we will, charity would warrant me in saying that he was misunderstood, rather than to say, he meant to deceive his brethren. But, farther, it is said, and this much I fear we shall be obliged to admit, that—

"Contradictory precepts and examples abound in the Bible. Thus, 'honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.' Very good. Now, pray, reconcile this with the behavior of Jesus Christ to his mother Mary, in repeated instances, of harsh language and reproof. Compare it with the following text, Luke xiv. 26. 'If any man come to me, and *hate* not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.'" I grant the objection

here, in all its force ; that is, if these words are to be construed literally, as meaning just what they say. The only apology which can be made is to plead the Hebrew idiom ; that the language is comparative ; that the *me* does not mean so much the person of Jesus, as the glorious doctrine which he taught, &c. &c. In this way I can reconcile it tolerably well to my own mind. But, then, how few, comparatively speaking, know any thing about Hebrew idioms ; or what evidence have they that this is a Hebrew idiom, except what falls from the priest's lips, whose interest in these things may be very different from that of the common people ? Would the common people, would *children*, be likely to put such favorable constructions upon this language ? No, they would not. And is it not a solemn, but a melancholy fact, that religion, as it is generally understood, where it is taught fully up to the letter, tends to alienate, rather than to increase the affection of even the nearest relations, unless they happen to think exactly alike, which is not often the case ? For the sake of the unlearned, therefore, I would be in favor of expunging all such passages from the book ; or, at least, of modifying them so that they would not be so likely to mislead the affections of the youthful mind.

'Then, again: "Thou shalt not kill." Very good. Why, then, is the Old Testament filled with cruel, revengeful, murderous commands ? Why were all the women and children, and all the animals on the face of the earth, put to death at the deluge, because some of the men did not live as God wished them ? Thou shalt kill—thou shalt put to death—thou shalt smite with the edge of the sword—thine eye shalt not spare—thou shalt surely put to death men, women, and children, oxen, sheep, and asses ! These commands are so frequent in the Old Testament, that it is as unnecessary, as it would be revolting

to our feelings, to recite the passages. " Yet do the [orthodox] clergy, without blushing, and without any scruple of conscience, being paid and hired by their ignorant hearers, declare these abominable commands to have been given by God Almighty ;" that they were written by holy men of old, as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost ; " inspired by him, the God of mercy and peace ! Can the human imagination imagine any falsehood too gross and abominable for these men to utter, when they utter such detestable commands as the commands of God ! No wonder the [orthodox] Christian religion is a cruel and intolerant religion, and its priesthood a cruel and intolerant priesthood. No wonder, [engines of torture have been invented, the most cruel massacres have been executed, in the name, and in honor of their God,] when their religion engages them to defend these horrid precepts and practices !"

" Thou shalt not commit adultery." Very good. This is all right. Let us look at the conduct of the holy men of old, in reference to this precept, and let us see how far the precept justifies the practice, or the practice was in conformity to the precept. Had Moses forgotten the conduct of *Abraham* and *Hagar* ; of *Lot* in his tipsy frolic ; of *Jacob* with his two servant maids ; or did he mean to impeach the character of his holy ancestors ? I shall spare the feelings of my audience, and direct you to the *Bible* for the shameful, or rather *shameless* practices to which I allude. But may I not be permitted to say, that David, who is set up in the scriptures as being a man after God's own heart, " was the legitimate king of murder and adultery ?" Who can believe the story of *Solomon*, with his three hundred wives, and seven hundred concubines ? And, admitting it true, was it a mark either of much wisdom, or of much virtue ? And since the clergy

will still persist in treating as sacred a circumstance or transaction that ought long ago to have been expunged from the book, or else the whole book laid aside on the account of it, may I not be permitted to ask, without offending the delicacy, even if I should wound the feelings of the orthodox, of any part of my audience, who committed adultery, or did any one commit adultery, with the young wife of Joseph? To save the credit of the scriptures as much as possible, as well as the religion of Jesus, I will say, that, in all probability, if such a person ever existed, he was "the son of Joseph." John i. 45.

"Thou shalt not steal" All very well. This is the precept. Now, what was the practice? The *Israelites* stole, or, rather, borrowed without an intention to return, many jewels and other things from the Egyptians. Did God authorize them to do so, or not? *Rebecca* stole her father's household gods. *Micah* stole some metal and made it into gods. *Samson* killed thirty Philistines for the purpose of stealing their garments. *David* killed two hundred Philistines to steal—what? (1 Sam. xviii. 25—27,) that he might obtain the king's daughter to be his wife.

But I have rehearsed enough of these scriptural contradictions, though they might have been multiplied to a much greater extent. I shall endeavor, in these lectures, to lay the axe to the root of the tree; I shall strike ~~the~~ honestly and fairly, "by argument such as I believe to be in point, and by facts such as I believe incontrovertible," at the root of what I conceive to be a long prevailing and most pernicious imposture. If the orthodox clergy of any sect, for all have more or less orthodox notions; but if the priests of any order can defend their doctrines by open and fair discussion, let them do it. "These are not days and times when men will willingly pay their money for

unproveable assertions, and sectarian squabbles. The strong hold of the priesthood, at this day, consists of the females"—I ask pardon of the female part of my audience ; I consider them as laudable exceptions ; were they otherwise, they would not be here ; but they themselves will bear witness to the truth of what I am about to remark. I say, then, the strong hold of the priesthood, at this day, consists of females, " whose weak and uninstructed intellects the clergy contrive, through fear and through fraud, to mislead and govern. Among sensible *men* there is now only one opinion, that priests, and the priesthood, subsist upon imposture, and are the greatest nuisances that society has to complain of." I am perfectly willing to admit, that, even among them, also, there are many laudable exceptions ; but these are only as small wheels, moved by the great ones of the large machine. They are pleased with their own activity, and think, no doubt, that they are doing wonders. But they know neither the mechanism nor the structure, much less the operations and ultimate object of the whole machine. These are doing some good, in their way. But to prevent the pernicious and dangerous tendency of the operation of the whole, collectively, it will be necessary to check the progress of these also, and teach them a different mode of doing good. The greatest peace, happiness, and comfort of man, collectively, of man universally, is an object so great, so important, and so good, that all other objects should be rendered subservient thereunto. In fact, there is nothing good, except what is either promotive of, or else in perfect unison with, this great and general good.

Notwithstanding, therefore, there may be much good obtained from a knowledge of the scriptures ; notwithstanding they are venerable for their antiquity, and curious for much of what they contain, yet, after all, " I ask

of any honest and well meaning parent, how he can justify to himself bringing up his children in *reverential* belief of such a book as the Bible? Is there a book in existence that contains more filth and more falsehood? So much, that I dare not copy the proofs of my assertion on paper, lest the public should cry out against exposing these abominations! To take such advantage as [most orthodox] parents usually do take, of the infant understandings of their offspring, is a gross imposition; which, when the child becomes a man, he will not thank his parent for, if he have common sense. It is a sacrifice, for the most part, to mere pusillanimity; the parents are afraid of the priests, and, therefore, they sacrifice to the priesthood the intellect of their children.

"If the Christian religion be well founded in its historical evidence, a well read person can easily show it. If it be not, is it not a base countenance afforded to imposture to countenance this religion? The clergy have been challenged often enough to defend themselves; why do they not do it?" It is said, that Mr. Campbell has done it; that he has gained a complete victory, yea, a perfect triumph, over infidelity. I hope so, and, therefore, am very anxious to see the work; but, having seen and read the opening and closing address of Mr. Owen, I fear, after all, that it will not fully meet the expectations of orthodoxy, if any of the clergy are so sanguine as to expect that ~~this~~ work will put the disputed point at rest. But the clergy have the best chance in the world of doing this if it be in their power. "The press is open to them, public encouragement supports them, public prejudice favors them, they are sure of a fair and patient hearing. Why do they not come out and defend their Sabbath-day money ~~making~~? They are accused of Sabbath breaking of the word ~~and~~; of receiving money for declaring from the pulpit, every

Sunday, what they do not know to be true, and what they [or at least many of them] ought to know to be false. Yet they will not let a farmer even make hay when the sun shines on a Sabbath day ; this is a privilege they exclusively reserve to themselves." This is plain talk ; perhaps severe ; but its truth only makes it severe. If the clergy did not expect to reap some benefit from the people being compelled to be idle on the Sabbath, or else to go to church, would they be so tenacious about the Sabbath day ? What is the reason that they, and all who are disposed to go and hear them, cannot be just as devout, just as pious, just as good, and the people just as well enlightened, edified, and instructed, though other people, who do not wish to hear them, should be about their secular employments ? It may be said, that the noise and bustle of business would disturb them. Granted. But why does it not disturb them at the dedication of a church, or the ordination of a minister ; acts equally solemn in their nature, and which are generally performed on a week day ; yet we hear no complaint on account of any disturbance or inconvenience on these occasions. But the inconvenience would be far less on the Sabbath, as there would be far less business done, even were the whole to be left to the common courtesy and common sense of the community, without any law on the subject.

I have, in this discourse, wandered far from the subject proposed to be discussed. But these are topics that I wished to touch upon, and there will be no place where they could have come in so well as in this introductory lecture. If we must have a religion, I wish to have one that is not only rational, but true ; one in which all who feel at all religiously disposed, can cordially unite ; and in which there shall be nothing particularly offensive to any. My heart sickens, and recoils within me, when I see so much

alienation of feeling among people who would otherwise be cordial friends, were it not for some slight difference of religious sentiments. I know that I possess none of these feelings myself, towards man, woman, or child, on account of any difference in our religious views; and could I find a corresponding feeling, and other circumstances being agreeable, I could sit down and converse just as cheerfully, and just as pleasantly, with those who should differ ever so widely from me, as I could with a person exactly of my own sentiment. Yea, of the two, I should take a deeper interest, as I should hope that the conversation would be more likely to do good.

My next lecture will treat on the nature of evidence. It will be important for those who mean to hear the evidences themselves, that they should also hear these preliminary discourses; otherwise they will not be so capable of judging of the evidence when they hear it.

I shall close this lecture in the language of a late writer, the author of the *Essays*, I suspect, though in a later work. "Never, never will mankind be at peace—never, never will a mild and benevolent morality take place of malignant intolerance, and money-making pretensions to piety, until we get rid of that greatest of all earthly nuisances, A HIRED AND PAID PRIESTHOOD.

"In Great Britain the same sentiments are fast gaining ground. A few months ago, (1828,) a book of great various learning, and uncommon research, entitled the *CELTIC DRUIDS*, by Godfrey Higgins, Esq., quarto, was published in London. It is a work that ranks high in the profound literature of the day. I copy the concluding paragraph of that work, with which, I have no doubt many of my readers will agree. It shows the opinions beginning to prevail among the learned in Great Britain. It is from page 299. 'Of all the evils that escaped from



Pandora's box, the institution of PRIESTHOODS was the worst. Priests have been the curse of the world. And if we admit the merits of many of those of our own time, to be as pre-eminent above all others as the esprit de corps of the most self-contented individual of the order may incite him to consider them, great as I am willing to allow the merits of individuals to be, I will not allow that they form exceptions strong enough to destroy the general nature of the rule. Look at China ; at the festival of Jaggernaut ; the Crusades ; the massacres of St. Bartholomew, of the Mexicans, and the Peruvians ; the fires of the inquisition ; of Mary, Cranmer, Calvin, and of the Druids ! Look at Ireland ; look at Spain ; in short, look every where, and every where you will see the priests reeking with gore. They have converted populous and happy nations into deserts ; and have transformed our beautiful world into a slaughter house, drenched with blood and tears ! ”

## LECTURE II.

“ Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thes. v. 21.

[FOR what I shall advance in this lecture I am almost wholly indebted to “ Philo Veritas,” (for so I call my learned friend, it being the name attached to the Essays, and the most conspicuous by which he is yet known to the public,) and, therefore, shall not think it necessary to give credit for any thing except what I find quoted by him. The audience will readily perceive it, should I advance any thing of my own. The subject now before us is,]

### HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.

The means of arriving at truth, whether as to past facts of history, or past facts in the common occurrences of life, are the same; and whether they relate to the payment of a sum of money, or the progress of a revolution, we must depend on the relation of witnesses, or written documents, or on the reasonable conclusions afforded by ascertained collateral facts; that is, on circumstantial evidence. The rules of judging of the value of the evidence offered, is the same, whatever be the object of enquiry.

Courts of justice are so much in the habit of discussing the value of evidence offered, that there are a set of rules adopted by the common consent of all legal writers on the subject, which may be regarded as the canons of evidence. In the British and the American courts, these rules have been laboriously established by repeated discussion, and

trials of their utility. Nor has any branch of the law attracted more (if so much) attention as the law of evidence. It did not begin to be systematically treated in England till the time of Chief Baron Gilbert. The compilations on the subject in the old digests, were meagre, and far from being adequate to the decision of the numerous cases that the prodigious extent of dealing within the last half century has given rise to. Buller's *Elementary Treatise on the Law of Nisi Prius*, was the first book that showed the necessity of strict attention to the rules of evidence, and the practice of examination and cross-examination.\*

1. We are not to expect in history the same accuracy as we observe in a court of justice. In history, the historians are voluntary narrators; they do not write as a witness speaks, under compulsion. 2. We never know precisely the real motives that actuate a historian to write. 3. We have no means of exercising the valuable privilege of oral examination, or the invaluable privilege of cross-examination. 4. He has it in his power, without being called to account, unless by laborious criticism, a science yet in its infancy, to adduce what testimony he pleases, to cull out what may suit his purpose, to give it the complexion that suits his own views, and to omit, if he pleases, documents that would be troublesome to obtain or examine. On all these points, a court of justice, with their means and appliances, have greatly the advantage of a reader of history. Still there are rules and canons established by common sense and experience, that are common to the honest searcher after

\* For the books used, and the authorities referred to, on this subject, see the essays of Philo Veritas, as published in the *fifth* volume of the Correspondent. These lectures are designed for popular reading. Not one out of a thousand has access to many of the works referred to, were the references given. They are useful to the learned reader only. This general reference, therefore, is deemed sufficient for the common reader. Let the facts be controverted and refuted if they can be.

truth, whether in a cause before a court, or in the page of the historian.

And, first, of the *testimony of witnesses*.

1. Objections to the credit—to the competency—that is, to the propriety of a witness being examined at all, are, in modern practice, narrowed down to, 1. Exclusions by positive law for infamy; 2. Exclusions for heterodoxy; becoming gradually much out of fashion; [and ought never to be admitted at all;] 3. Exclusions from interest in the result or event of the cause before the court; 4. Exclusions, where the examination, if answered, would unfairly compel the witness to criminate himself.

All other objections apply, not to his credit, competency, or admissibility, but to his credibility only; they impeach the value of his testimony, and furnish reason for defalcation from the respect otherwise due to it. Among the grounds of absolute exclusion, however, are, “all offences founded in fraud, and which come within the general notion of the *crimen falsi* of the Roman law; as perjury, forgery, piracy, swindling, and cheating.”

2. All evidence is either direct or presumptive. Direct evidence may be either impugned, or confirmed by other direct evidence, and also by presumptive evidence. *Direct* evidence is where the facts in dispute are communicated by those who have had actual knowledge of them by means of their own senses. *Presumptive* evidence is where a fact is not directly and positively known and testified, but is inferred as a reasonable conclusion from other collateral facts or circumstances connected with it, and which are known. It frequently happens, that no direct and positive evidence can be had; and often, where it can be had, it becomes necessary to try its weight and accuracy by means of the presumptions arising from surrounding circumstances, with which it may be compared. The

want of written documents, the fallaciousness of the human memory, the great temptations which perpetually occur to exclude the true, the suppression of true, and the fabrication of false testimony, render it necessary to call in every aid for ascertaining the truth.

3. Our natural reason for believing the declarations of others—for, giving credit to human testimony, is our constant observation and experience, that we, and other men, who have no reason for suppressing or disguising the truth, or for saying what is false, usually tell truth, and not falsehood. Therefore, from experience and observation of ourselves and others, we repose confidence in the veracity of others, when we see no reason why we should not do so. We refuse credit to men of bad character—to men known to be guilty of falsehood—to men who are interested to suppress or disguise the truth, because experience teaches us, that we cannot place confidence in what such men say. Doubts of their veracity have, in our minds, been associated with their declarations and narrations.

If our neighbor tells us of some very extraordinary circumstance, not conformable to our previous experience in relation to it, we consider whether our neighbor is a man of veracity generally; whether he has any motive to deceive us in this instance; whether he may not be deceived himself, and liable to mistake in some way or other, and we reason with ourselves which is most consonant to our past experience, that the fact related should be true, or that he should, from some cause unknown to us, be deceived himself, or, from some motive unknown to us, be induced to vary from the truth. Hence, although common and usual testimony is sufficient to establish common and usual facts; yet, facts strange, unaccountable, uncommon, cannot be substantiated on merely common evidence; they

require a proportional strength of testimony to overcome objections founded on our previous experience of the improbability of such facts.

4. So, as to presumptive evidence ; being accustomed to observe, that like antecedents are attended with like consequents, (to use Dr. Brown's phraseology,) we are apt, by the constitution of our nature, to infer the latter from the former. Hence our belief in the connexion between motive and action, and our habitual attempts to explain the one by the other. When certain motives and certain actions have been long associated in our minds as the result of our observation and experience, we are naturally led to associate them in fact, and in practical reasonings. Hence, the investigation of the motives that lead a man to act thus or thus, is always an important point of judicial enquiry, particularly in cases of crime.

5. Presumptions in civil cases may arise from great neglect—from the urging of dormant claims—from the offering of inferior, instead of the best testimony—from omission to produce evidence easily attainable, or in the party's power—from his having any interest in the cause, or in the question to be determined—from his connexion with any of the parties—from any bias arising from *esprit de corps*, [party spirit,] religious or political ; if he has to give testimony of, or against his religious sect, or his political party, it is hardly possible that his testimony should not be tinged, or warped, by these very strong motives of bias. Presumptions may also arise from character and station in society—from known habits—from occupation, and from various other circumstances. All these presumptions are founded on general observation and experience, and are, therefore, fair topics of reasoning before we form a conclusion.

6. Hearsay evidence cannot be heard ; that is, it is not

admissible in a court of justice. A court and jury must decide on reasonable certainty. Even where the veracity, the perfect knowledge from all opportunity of observation, the good sense and good character, and the freedom from bias of a witness is undoubted, doubts may yet arise on his testimony. [Even the most unprejudiced eye witness, may not see, or he may not observe, all the circumstances; hence the testimony of a good witness may be much weakened by the testimony of others equally good.] Much more, when we are utterly at a loss as to the character, the means of information, the veracity, the freedom from bias, the attentive and accurate observation of the original witness, whose evidence is retailed to us at second hand in a general way. Above all, there are no means of sifting out the truth, and giving due weight to objections by cross-examination, that invaluable preservative against error in testimony. Nor are we able to tell whether the hearsay witness before us, was himself attentive, accurate, faithful, impartial, and on the alert to get rid of error in the relation of his informant. Moreover, to let in hearsay testimony, is to let in all hearsay testimony of persons, however careless, however free from all obligation as to accuracy, or even to truth in their narrations. It would be to let in all loose and idle clamor, report, and tittle-tattle, unsifted, unexamined, unweighed. And yet, how much is all known history liable to this most fatal objection! Shall I read you some book of history, said his son to Sir Robert Walpole at his last illness? History—no; I have done with all works of fiction, and such is history.

For great and prominent features, for all transactions in themselves probable, for the usual course and current of events, history may be quoted; but where is it built on the evidence of unbiassed eye-witnesses? Suppose a man of

good sense and veracity present at the battle of Waterloo, were to give me an account of what passed on that eventful day, how little could he tell from his own knowledge ! how liable were his senses to be deceived ! In the Albion of March 28, 1829, is an account of the battle of Waterloo by an eye-witness, well told. There is in it this passage, " Are the French coming, sir, said I to a wounded Scotch officer ? Egad, I cannot tell, replied he, we know nothing about it ; we had enough to do to take care of ourselves. An English lady, elegantly attired, now rushed forward : is my husband safe ? cried she, eagerly. Good God, madam, replied one of the men, how can we tell ? I do not know the fate of those who were fighting by my side, and I could not see a yard around me." History being thus liable to false information, to imperfect and inaccurate information, to the information of those who may, with perfect impunity, be intentionally false ; or who may be vague, or inaccurate, or careless, or indifferent—who may substitute surmises for facts, or who may see every thing through a mist of prejudice springing up from various sources—how necessary is it to require every precaution to be taken in obtaining original, first rate information ; in ensuring truth and accuracy, free from suspicious motives of personal or party interest, before we place any confidence whatever in the account. To rest our faith on second hand, careless, contradictory, inaccurate relations, bearing, upon the face of them, want of authenticity, want of truth, want of accuracy, and obvious partiality, is leaning our weight on a broken reed. It is what every court of justice, in every civilized country upon earth, would reject, if a dollar were at issue upon it.

Even where the question before the court and jury is this, *does any tradition exist of the fact alleged ?* the tradition is required to be general, to be of a public nature,



to be uniform, consistent, uncontradicted, derived from persons likely to know the facts, free from suspicion, and reasonable.

7 “One of the most important rules” on this subject is, that *the best “attainable evidence”* should be adduced to prove every disputed fact. All secondary and inferior evidence must be rejected, when it is attempted to be substituted for evidence of a higher and superior character or nature.” For this substitution may reasonably be suspected to arise from sinister motive, and from apprehension that the best evidence, if produced, would alter the case to the prejudice of the party who attempts to substitute evidence of an inferior grade. There are no exceptions to this rule substantially : all the apparent exceptions are consistent with the plain meaning of the rule itself ; which enjoins the production of the best and most unexceptionable evidence that could have been produced or offered, under the circumstances of the case : as a man’s own acts or writings are to be produced, if they are in existence, and no other evidence of them or their contents can be given. No copy of a deed is admissible, if the deed itself be in existence and attainable. General Eaton has written and published an account of General Jackson and his campaigns. Suppose it to contain conversations and opinions of G. J., and that General Eaton had suppressed it purposely till General Jackson was dead ; would it have been equally authentic ? Would it not be said, why not publish this while he was living, that these conversations and opinions might have been treated as being true, or not true, when attributed to that gentleman ? So, in the conversations, doctrines, and sayings, attributed to Jesus Christ, the best evidence the nature of the case would admit of, would have been his own account of his doings, or his own authentication of the accounts given

by other persons. This might have been done with ease; why was it left undone? Or why are we required to give implicit credit to second-hand evidence?

8. Where evidence on one side is positive, on the other negative, the positive testimony is preferable, as a general rule. Thus, if one witness of sufficient credibility, swears that he heard or saw a fact, and another witness, equally creditable, swears he was present at the time, and neither heard or saw it, this is no contradiction, unless the fact itself, and the situation of the last witness were such, that he could not possibly avoid seeing or hearing it. For instance, the accounts given of the life, conduct, condemnation, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ—the darkness and earthquake that took place—the rending of the veil of the temple, the rising of the dead from their graves, all matters of great public notoriety, forming a part of the Jewish history of that day—circumstances in themselves not only of great publicity, but of most extraordinary character, could not [as I conceive] be passed over unnoticed by any contemporary writer of transactions at Jerusalem at that time; yet, neither Philo, who probably was there at the time, or Josephus, [who was born but two years after the crucifixion,] take the slightest notice of any of these extraordinary facts. Men of learning, of research, and themselves Jews, acquainted minutely with Jewish history, could not have omitted noticing transactions so extraordinary and so recent, had they really happened.

9. Where the evidence is direct, and conflicting, the effect is destroyed on both sides, like positive and negative quantities in algebra of equal value. If their values be unequal, the best evidence must preponderate.

10. In common cases, of no great moment, we may reasonably pronounce in conformity to a slight preponderance of evidence: but in cases of magnitude, or where

much is at stake, this is not justifiable. The preponderance that would justify awarding a few dollars, would not suffice to put a man to death as a criminal, or to subject him to imprisonment, or even to the loss of character.

11. The corruption, subordination, or fabrication of evidence, deeply affects that side of the question it is introduced to support. "As the credit due to a witness, is founded in the first instance on general experience of human veracity, it follows that a witness who gives false testimony as to one particular, cannot be credited as to any; according to the legal maxim, *falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus*. The presumption that a witness will speak the truth, ceases, so soon as it manifestly appears that he is capable of perjury."

[What shall we say, then, to a cause supported at its commencement by fifty gospels, forty-six of which, at least, are forgeries, and are so acknowledged? And by regular professors of falsehood and forgery, such as Origen, Eusebius, Jerom, and Chrysostom?]

12. Bias from personal friendship or enmity—consanguinity—mutuality of interest—connexion in the way of trade or profession, are to be taken into the account. None of these are stronger than the bias arising from membership, *esprit de corps*, particularly in case of religious sects or parties. Even those who care nothing about religion, care about the sect which they have joined: nor is there any fraud or falsehood that religious persons, or persons pretending so to be, have scrupled to employ, to promote a common cause. The history of christianity, from the miracles of the first century, to the miracles of Prince Hohenloe, furnish proofs in superabundance of this position; proofs impossible to be contradicted: because the passions of his sect are much stronger and more influential than his own.

13. In the examination of human testimony, then, we

enquire who is the witness, what is his character, what his situation in life, whether he has any bias on his mind that may warp his testimony, whether he has any interest of his own or others to serve, that may produce the same effect. Whether he had sufficient time and opportunity to observe the fact he testifies ; whether he is of sufficient judgment, caution, and accuracy, to induce us to place a reliance on his narration. If deficient in any of these particulars, we must defalk proportionably from his credibility. It is self-evident that all these particulars apply to historical testimony. If the historian does not relate the fact on his own credit and authority, but on that of another, he ought, at least, to furnish us with the means of judging how far the preceding objects of enquiry apply to the authority he relies on.

14. Hence, a historian who does not accurately quote his authority for a fact, when it rests on his own testimony, is utterly unworthy of credit in the case in question. It is his duty to enable us to judge of the value of the testimony on which his facts rest. A history wherein the authorities are not accurately cited, can never be quoted ; nor ought it to find a place in any well selected library.

To apply this : *Who* wrote the four gospels now used by christians? In what *language* originally? *When* were they written? *Where* were they written? What *measures* were taken to ascertain their comparative authenticity? Is there a clergyman living who can give satisfactory answers to these questions? No : there is not. Yet are not these enquiries to the last degree important to christianity? Are not all the books of the Old Testament open to the same enquiries?

15. No historian is worthy of credit, whose history contains gross anachronisms ; allusions to facts of subsequent date ; or to customs of subsequent date ; or who employs

words, expressions, and phrases, not conformable to the time of which he speaks. Such anachronisms furnish irrefutable objections to the authenticity of any ancient work. The anachronisms of the Pentateuch are numerous and glaring: there are many also in the New Testament. Let us suppose a play, published as Shakspeare's, contained allusions to the American war: is not that enough to destroy all claim to authenticity?

16. A writer in Walsh's review, in treating of the Homeric poems, in a review of *Wolf's Prolegomena*, about a twelve month ago, shows clearly that the materials for writing any history, or long work, did not exist previously to the use of the Egyptian papyrus.\* Of which, probably, Herodotus was the first historian who did make use. It was not common till the time of the Ptolemies. This point of historical criticism, appears to me of sufficient importance to be considered; and, unless it be refuted, it will make sad havoc with many supposed ancient works. Indeed how can the Pentateuch be written on plaistered stones, the only method of writing known to Moses? (Deut. xxvii. 1,) or on Babylonish bricks, or sheets of copper or lead; or cow hides; or on blocks or sticks of wood; or on waxen linen, or wooden tablets? It is a farce to talk of a long history written on such materials: men who gravely tell us this, may be men of learning, but they have no more common sense than will serve their own purposes, and scarcely that.

Who ever cited any one of the books of the Old Testament before the Septuagint appeared? Their very first appearance was not till papyrus was in common use at Alexandria: then, and not before, we hear of the Septua-

\* A kind of reed of which the Egyptians made paper. It was not used more than 500 years before the Christian era. Review, Vol. II. p. 307.

gint. But where is the authority for the originals of the Septuagint? Who can tell?

17. I have already noticed, that in proportion as a fact is in itself credible because conformable to human experience under the circumstances connected with it, the weight of testimony necessary to establish it, is less. In proportion as a fact is in opposition to human experience, the weight of evidence necessary to establish it, must be greater. For the analysis of the problem, results in this; is it more improbable, that the fact should be true as related, or the witnesses should be deceived, or should have some motive for deceiving? Wherever a very extraordinary fact is related, even by concurrent testimony, we are to consider whether the witnesses had any bias of self-interest or family interest, or any party purpose, of religion or politics to serve. For such sources of incorrectness, as we know from long, indeed from constant, and universal experience, are very apt to stand in the way of truth, and tempt to forgery, falsehood, and fraud. Take for examples, the Sibilline prophecies, the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, or the miracles of the three first centuries of the christian church; take, in more modern times, any of the popish legends; or take the miracles at the tomb of the Abbe St. Paris; those within these few years performed at St. Winifred's Well, published by Dr. Milner; or the miracles of Prince Hohenloe. We see clearly the temptation, and the resulting temptation in all these cases. The testimonies to the death and resurrection of Christ, are liable to a similar objection: there is not one disinterested witness specified. All the disciples lived at their ease, upon this lucrative story, [and, except what persecution they met with from the Jews, which may have been much exaggerated,] maintained in plenty, and respected by their ignorant followers. Even his brothers and sisters, who disbe

lieved and ridiculed his pretensions before he was put to death, joined his travelling disciples, and lived at their ease on christian credulity, after his decease. "Have we not," says St. Paul, (1 Cor. ix. 5.) "power to eat and drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, or wife, as well as the other apostles, and as the brethren of our Lord? and Cephas? or I only and Barnabas? If we sow unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing that we should reap of you carnal things?"

Men thus subsisting by an alleged imposture, are very suspicious witnesses to establish the truth of the facts denied. Would any court of justice let such evidence go to a jury? [I must confess, I never viewed this subject so fully in this light before. The main fact has been always assumed, rather than proved: it has been taken for granted, that the apostles were inspired men; hence, they have been allowed to testify in their own case; or others have been allowed to testify for them, and in their name, whatever would suit their own purpose.]

I am fully aware of the difficulty attending the question, what is a miracle? I am aware that we must be very cautious in pretending to know the extent of the laws of nature. Thus, very many tricks of a juggler, appear to persons ignorant of the deception, to be miraculous. The king of Siam was half justified in rejecting the story of water becoming solid, as contrary to universal experience *in his climate and country*. Mr. Robinson, in his examination of the authenticity of the *Parian Chronicle*, (the Oxford or Arundelian marbles,) states it as a conclusive objection, that they relate the impossible fact of a large stone falling from the heavens into the Egean Sea: a fact, that since our attention has been drawn to meteorolites by M. Chladni, and Mr. Howard, nobody scruples to believe. [So prone are sensible men to believe, without

the most indubitable evidence, except what is in some way connected with religion or superstition, that many well known facts now, had they formerly been related, would not have been received as truth.] As the diving bell, the balloon, the many strange modes of producing fire and flame by the chemical operation and intermixture of cold liquors—the firing of gunpowder by a drop of water, by means of potassium—the conversion of potass into a metal like silver—the deceptions of phantasmagoria, &c. would formerly have been rejected as fabulous even by sensible men, because not coincident with any one's anterior experience. Every step in the progress of knowledge, decreases the number of facts that would formerly be regarded as miraculous, and renders them more credible than heretofore.

Still, there are innumerable facts, which we know, with sufficient certainty, to transcend the powers of man, and the observed laws of nature: and we have a right to say that the force of univereal observation and experience would justify us in rejecting them at once, because no testimony of any dozen or other number of witnesses, can overcome the overwhelming weight of universal experience in every country and in all ages.

For instance, suppose witnesses were produced to prove that a man really dead and buried for four days, being dug up and touched with the relic of a saint of the holy Roman catholic church, was instantly brought up into full life, health, and activity—what number of witnesses would be required to prove this fact? Is 2 Kings, xiii. 21. sufficient? Is the resuscitation of Lazarus, or of Jairus's daughter, any different.

The Rev. Mr. Forsyth, a man of taste, talent, and learning, in his remarks on Italy, p. 344, gives an account of a *withered elm-tree* in the Piazza del Duomo at Florence, being suddenly restored to vegetation by the body



of Saint Zenobio resting against its trunk. "This event happened when Florence was more populous than now, and the most enlightened city of Europe : it happened in the most public place of the whole town : in the presence of many thousands then attending the solemn removal of the saint from San Lorenzo to the cathedral. The event is recorded by cotemporary historians, and is inscribed on a marble column, now standing where the tree stood. A column erected in the face of those very persons who saw the miracle performed, and who certainly, if the miracle were false, would not suffer so impudent a story to insult them." Why not, Mr. Forsyth ? Would not every prudent person on such an occasion say, what business is it of mine ? Why should I buffet a stone wall, and make myself the certain victim of clerical indignation and revenge, by exposing this clever piece of priestcraft ? Mr. Forsyth says, this miracle puzzles him, although he acknowledges it is exactly the same with the oak at Capera, which burst into leaf the instant Augustus set his foot on that island ! What man would be blockhead enough to convince a Neapolitan multitude that the liquifaction of the blood of St. Januarius was a clumsy trick ? Would any body have been puzzled about the withered elm but a *clerical* narrator like the Rev. Mr. Forsyth ?

Is there any ancient or modern relations [those in the Bible not excepted] so fully and completely authenticated, as the miracles of the tomb of the Abbe Paris ? I have two volumes, [says Philo Veritas] (one in quarto, with plates of the transactions) of the miracles and the proces verbales. Yet the king ended the delusion at once ;

De part le Roi : defense a Dieu,  
De faire miracles dans ce lieu.\*

So, in the case of Prince Hohenloe, when the pope be-

\* The king commands, that God shall not  
Work more miracles on this spot.

gan to blush for the publicity of these silly impostures, the prince could perform them no longer.

Produce as many ancient witnesses as you please for Pythagoras's golden thigh: will any assignable number suffice to substantiate the fact?

Suppose a man [said to have been] born blind, should have his eyes anointed by another man with dirt and spittle, and then washing it off in a particular pond of water, should instantly be restored to sight: what force of testimony would induce a reasonable man in the present day to believe this?

Whenever a [supposed] miraculous fact is presented and exhibited to a multitude of spectators, it is nothing but a dexterous deception—an apparent violation of a law of nature, where some circumstance is concealed, which when known would explain the whole, like the phantasmagoria of our public exhibitions. [Or, like the powers of Ventriloquism, very extraordinary exhibitions of which I witnessed in Mr. Nichols, but a few evenings ago.\*]

Let us suppose, for instance, the permanent cure of some disease. This is open, you say, to judicial testimony; the witnesses can say whether the patient was ill, when, and at what time, on what occasion, and in what manner he was treated and cured. No doubt all this can be testified.

\* The following is from the handbill, among many others equally striking and amusing.

"Mr. Nichols will give imitations of different sounds, such as the sawing of wood, pouring of wine, drawing of corks, music of the Jews harp, &c.; will hold an amusing tete-a-tete with an old gentleman of the name of Count Piper, and his little son, representing *himself*, uncle Ben, and two servants, Peter and Jack, in the kitchen below, and an amusing old Lady singing under the floor, together with the crying of *three* children, apparently in great distress. In this scene there are *eight* voices, besides the *three* children.

"He will throw his voice into the body of any gentleman present, and seemingly hold a familiar conversation with him."

But what court of justice has the means, the criterion of distinguishing a natural from a miraculous cure? Moreover, there are six other considerations to be weighed before the miraculous cure can be ascertained. 1. Was there a real malady, or such a one as is pretended. The symptoms may be imagined. 2. Was there any illness at all. 3. The illness may have been cured by other means than the pretended ones. 4. Or it may have passed away naturally. 5. Or it may be alleviated only, or suspended. 6. It may continue unalleviated, while a falsehood is told of its cure, either by the patient or the operator.

Unless all these points are accurately examined and ascertained, there is no certainty: now, in what case has this ever been done? In what case has due care and precaution been taken to remove all reasonable doubt or suspicion? Has it been done in any Christian case, either of the four gospels or popish legends? Never. Let me see such a case verified by a sufficient number of unexceptionable witnesses, with all precautions to remove fraud or error, and with all the forms that a court of justice deems absolutely necessary to arrive at truth. Without this last condition—by extra judicial testimony—taken *ex parte*—unconfronted—not cross-examined—not observed upon—any case of witchcraft, or possession, might be, as in a crowd of instances they have been proved. What is it that has caused such an impression for so many ages of the truth of miracles, ghosts, apparitions, magic, witchcraft, &c. &c.? It is, that the more there is of this supernatural belief, the more necessary do the impostures of the priesthood become: the public are persuaded by the priests that all these things exist, and that religion is necessary to control or counteract them. How many persons would gladly disabuse mankind. But mankind will not be disabused. Mankind is an ass, says the

Spanish proverb, who kicks those who endeavor to take off his paniers. Reason might combat these errors, perhaps, but the people, persuaded by the priesthood, will not have them combatted. Reason is accused of impiety, and condemned to death. With what rancor—with what deep seated malignity is every attempt to correct superstition received in this country at this moment! How miserably ignorant and bigoted are even our own legislators in this most enlightened country upon earth!

Suppose a proof were offered that a person in their clothing, well examined, being locked up in a room, with thick and strong walls, the windows fully secured, and the door locked, bolted and barred with every precaution of security, and that there being really no aperture for escape, by the chimney or otherwise, yet that the person so confined was seen a few minutes after walking the streets a mile off. Would a judge be authorized to refuse receiving such testimony? Assuredly: for the counter testimony of every one's experience, that such a case could not, and never did happen within any one's knowledge or memory, would be too strong for any positive evidence in support of it to overthrow. [Either there must have been some mistake about the man having been actually locked up in the room, or else some mistake about his having been seen walking the streets a mile off.]

Whatever, therefore, is established as true, by the uniform experience and testimony of every sensible man every where, and in all time past and present, may reasonably be considered as unrefutable by any testimony to the contrary of a comparatively few persons, who are far more likely to be mistaken, or prejudiced, or to have some motive for deception; than the uniform and unprejudiced experience of mankind should prove to be fallacious and

untrue. For such a supposition as this last destroys all reasonable ground of certainty in any case.

In fact, the history of the Christian church, from the beginning to the present day, presents little else than a history of disgraceful quarrels of the most rancorous description, and a series of falsehoods unexampled in all the other pages of history. Pious frauds consecrated by the highest authority ; false gospels, false documents, interpolations of ancient authors for the purpose of deception. false saints, false relics, false miracles, forged acts of councils, forged decretals, false donations, false revelations, spectres and apparitions, preternatural communications, miraculous cures, and supernatural revivals and outpourings of the spirit upon ignorant men and hysterical women, supported by the testimony of ancient fathers of the church, pontiffs, bishops, doctors, and holy men of the most popular sanctity, belonging to all manner of conflicting sects, and agreeing in nothing but the common duty of religious lying, forging, and inventing, to serve the interest of the priesthood, and promote the common cause of public deception.

As knowledge and information increase, all these theological contrivances lose their credit and efficacy. What miracle is performed or pretended ; what appears ; who is bewitched at this day in London or Paris, or even in [*Salem*, Boston,] New-York, or Philadelphia ? Priests, and the priesthood, and pious frauds, are now confined in their operations and effect nearly to women and children ; [I ask pardon, ladies, but the truth must be told ; I say, then, nearly to women and children ;] and the base wretches who enter our families, who work upon the irritable feelings of women and sick persons, who rob them of their property by false hopes, false promises, and false fears, and who govern the men by means of the women and

children, who always hold the ignorant in their power to stir them up in hatred against the wise, and who are accumulating funds and wealth for their unholy purposes far beyond the suspicion of those who do not examine modern facts—these avaricious and unprincipled deceivers will, according to present appearances, ultimately bring on the darkness and superstition of the middle ages. [The same means which is so powerful to enlighten, while the mind is left free to act, the means of the press, will be equally powerful to darken, if monopolized by the hands of the wicked, and the mind is thereby enslaved.] Why does not the legislature of New-York, and of every other state, pass a *mortmain* act?—[an act to prevent property from going into *dead hands*, where it is entirely useless to the state, and such are all religious institutions—an act to take possession of all such property, and either render it taxable, or else convert it to a national education, free from superstition; that is, free from religion; for all the religions of the present day are built on superstition. The people are ignorant of their rights. The answer, therefore, to the above question is plain and easy.] Because it is not easy to find a more deplorably ignorant and bigoted assembly—a more priest-ridden set of legislators than the legislators of New-York.

*Primus in orbe deos facit Timor.* Ignorance of natural causes begat terror : terror, superstition : superstition, priests and the priesthood : whose interests and unbending efforts are exerted to perpetuate the fear, the ignorance, and the superstition that gave them birth. The experience of past times, and the unhesitating conviction of well informed men at the present day, render every pretended miracle, Christian, Mahomedan, and Pagan, utterly incredible; and imperiously demand, not only strong testimony, but every precaution to be taken to prevent mistake,

in proportion as any asserted fact is of an extraordinary character. All the modes of judicial investigation and precaution that can be applied, ought rigidly to be required in such a case.

19. Hence, no historian is worthy of credit, unless, in proportion as we can ascertain his opportunities of personal information as to the facts he relates, his character and standing in society, his freedom from bias, and all the usual sources of mistake, inaccuracy, and deception. Where he relies on the testimony of others, in all cases of fact not intrinsically and antecedently credible, he ought faithfully to cite his authority, that we may judge of that authority by the same rules we judge of himself. An author who does not accurately refer to his authorities, is evidence for no fact whatever; and ought to be banished from our libraries. [On this rule, the Bible should be thus banished; and if men had followed this rule, it would have been banished long ago, as being **totally** unworthy of credit for any historical fact whatever.]

20. All historic authority is destroyed by manifest anachronisms as to dates, persons, and places, words and phrases. When Moses, the reputed author of the Pentateuch, which he had no means of writing, (Deut. xxvii. 1 et seq.) among fifty instances of this kind, alludes to the times of the kings of Israel and Judah—when Ezekiel, in his supposed prophecy, anterior to the captivity, alludes twice to that great man, the prophet Daniel, who was but about twelve years of age when the captivity happened—who can put faith in such authors, or give a moment's credit to their authenticity?

21. Let A be a narrator of a fact; he tells it to B, who tells it to C, who tells it to D. All these amount to but one witness, viz. A. No evidence of a fact is strengthened by such a series and succession of derivative testimony.

But if A, B, C, and D, each of them testify to the same fact from their own separate observation, without communication with each other, the testimony is strong in proportion to the number of such separate witnesses testifying independent of each other. If they agree in all the general, leading, and important features of the transaction, their testimony is not much vitiated by their disagreement as to minute particulars which will admit of being observed differently. But, all the sources of false information apply to each of them, and are to be so applied.

22. In transmitted and hearsay evidence, every fresh hand through which the narration passes, increases the chances of mistake, and deprives us of weighing the testimony to such a degree, that veracity and accuracy are annihilated altogether after half a dozen transmissions.

Such are the principal canons that bear upon historical evidence generally. They constitute a set of rules for judging of the value of historical evidence, that are founded on common sense, and every day's practice and experience in judicial proceedings. These are strictly applicable to the subject; for whether a man professes to tell truth by word of mouth, or to write it down for our information, the means of deciding whether it be truth or falsehood that he tells us, are the same. It may be said, that if such strictness be applied to past history, the value of it will be nearly annihilated, and so it ought to be. I have no belief in any historical fact [of the least importance, or which at all borders on the marvellous] beyond 500 years anterior to our christian era, for reasons already assigned. And of all subsequent history, from Herodotus to the last historian, I believe three fourths [of all that was written prior to the art of printing, perfectly] worthless.\* History

\* "I would ask the reader to peruse Mr. Richardson's preface to his *Per-*



is only of use for the conclusions we can draw from it, applicable to passing and future events. But from dubious facts, what useful conclusions can be drawn? The Augustan age of history has not yet arrived; and will not arrive, till readers are taught how to judge and discriminate, as well as read.

[In my next I shall enter into an examination of the evidence itself on which the authenticity of the gospels themselves, as well as the facts narrated therein, are supposed to rest.]\*

sian Dictionary, as to the histories of Alexander the Great, and the expedition of Xerxes, or the discrepancies in French and English accounts of the same historical transactions.

\* [The whole of the foregoing lecture is borrowed from Philo Veritas, as published in the Correspondent, except what is inclosed in brackets.]

## LECTURE III.

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### EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thes. v. 21.

ALL the canons of evidence laid down in the preceding lecture, may be brought to bear more or less directly on the evidences of christianity. The great difficulty which lies in the way of people generally, in arriving at any thing like truth, is, but few people, comparatively, have sufficient time and leisure to read, investigate, and examine for themselves; of course, they have to depend on the statements of others, in whom they place confidence. But these statements are often so contradictory, that they are at a loss what to believe; perhaps it is the safest to hold the mind in suspense, and not to place too great confidence in any, until long experience and repeated trials will warrant us in so doing.

My learned friend has added an extract from the *North American Review*, for April, 1829, as a sequel to his preceding essays; most of which essays I have embodied in the two foregoing lectures. He says, “this extract is manifestly the production of an able, but very disingenuous christian. I say,” says he, “disingenuous, because he commenced by calling Gibbon, the historian, a disingenuous writer. I challenge the author of that Review, to show me an instance of disingenuous reasoning in Gibbon’s sixteenth chapter: or of disingenuous quotation. I am satisfied the writer in

question is competent to the discussion, and he has no doubt the advantage of the library at Harvard College : let him use it. I tell him he cannot prove his assertion. Gibbon was not a hired and paid advocate of one side of a public question : the author of that Review probably is. Gibbon did not shape his course according to the road pointed out by popular prejudice ; he dared to run counter to it. The reviewer in the *North American*, has the advantage of popular prejudice, and popular bigotry, and all fashionable opinion in his favor. He swims with the stream. Let him show Gibbon's disingenuity *if he can*. I know he cannot. No honest man, who is not bribed to defend imposture, can be otherwise actuated, than by a spirit of hostility to the christian religion. I am so for no other reason but because I believe its proper appellation to be the christian imposture.\* If our author means what

\* The following is the extract from the *North American Review*, alluded to above.

"If the reader has followed us in the somewhat desultory course of our observations, he will be disposed to accord with us in the conclusion of the superior eloquence of the ancients ; their superiority, that is, not in the natural power itself, but in the more advantageous use of that power. This general inference will include the particular one, that in the mere beauties of composition, the rhetoric of history, the ancient historians, as a body, surpassed the moderns. It is no derogation from the exalted desert of so many admirable writers in all the living languages of Europe to confess this ; for, as we shall presently see, if to the venerable names of Greek and Roman story be awarded the palm of excellence in style, their successors may assert the better and wiser merit, of superiority in the inductive elements of history, of being more exact, more finished, more useful. The taste so prevalent among the ancient historians, of placing fictitious speeches in the mouths of prominent persons in their history, speeches conceived and composed by the historian himself—a practice judiciously relinquished by nearly all modern historians of eminence—illustrates the difference in spirit between the respective writers. Botta has greatly erred, we conceive, in attempting to revive this obsolete usage, founded altogether upon the rhetorical aim and taste of antiquity in the composition of history, in con-

the Christian religion has been, and still is, with a few laudable exceptions, in *practice*, I perfectly agree with

trast with the devotion to truth and simplicity, which is demanded by a more enlightened judgment.

“For nothing is plainer than the principle, that the value of history depends upon its certainty, that is, not only its conformity to truth in the narration of individual facts, but its general accuracy, fidelity, and fulness. It is this which should essentially characterize history ; since the charms of eloquence are equally fascinating when embodied in mere works of fiction. Absolute certainty, to be sure, is incompatible with human affairs. ‘*Dubitare cogor,*’ says Tacitus, ‘*fato et sorte nascendi.*’ History, therefore, although its end should be faithfully to mark the frailties, and celebrate the virtues of humanity, yet, like its object, is necessarily subject to imperfections. Too often has it betrayed the confidence of the great and good, who had leaned upon it, as the advocate of their worth and the pledge of their glory ; as the means of securing to their names, when dead, that justice from posterity, which the petty passions of their contemporaries had denied to their character when living. For it has obscured their worth and intercepted their glory, by the extravagance or faintness of its eulogium ; by total silence or the faultiness of its details ; and by the undue elevation of the merit of their competitors and opponents. But few, of the multitudes who assume the name of histories, resemble the abstract idea of historical perfection. The attainment of this lofty distinction, like the acquisition of the “*spolia opima*” at Rome, is the rare event in a long series of anxious efforts. But none, we think, can deny, that the standard of excellence, in this department of writing, has been considerably raised in modern times, without any diminution of the proportion of those who have reached it. This we shall perceive by considering those attributes of history, which the moderns have either improved or newly created ; to understand which, let us briefly premise a summary of the critical principles which apply to the subject.

“The principal fountains of history are tradition and contemporary relations. Tradition relates to accounts handed down orally from generation to generation, their origin being generally clouded in the remoteness of time, and their credibility established by no contemporary writings. It is essential to the plausibility of traditions that they contradict no other tradition which is equally plausible ; that they appear to be as old as the events which they commemorate ; that they appear to have been believed, as long as known ; that they be inconsistent with no existing public institution ; and that they coincide with all the better authenticated kinds of historical evidence. Traditions should not only be strengthened by these favorable presumptions, but they should be refined from every imputation of prejudice, interest, and misrepresentation. It is essential to the general credibility of

him; but, if by christian religion, he means such as we have reason to believe it was taught by Jesus and his

contemporary memoirs, that an unbroken series of proofs be adducible to show that they are genuine and free from adulteration; that the facts therein related agree with all other equally credible histories; and that the opinion of contemporary and subsequent writers bear witness to the fidelity, accuracy, and means of information of the author of the documents. These are the canons, by which to judge of the credibility of history, properly so called. But the express relation of an event may be corroborated by constructive and subsidiary evidence. Such are monuments, medals, and inscriptions, which are so frequently made use of to illustrate obscure points in Roman history; such are the "quipos" or knotted cords of the Peruvians, and the pictorial records of the Mexicans; such are the ruins, or any other equally certain traces of an ancient city; and such is any public institution, whose origin can be explained only by the particular tradition or writing under consideration. Examples of all these things, and of their utility in supporting or disproving accounts, which rest more immediately in human testimony, will readily occur to the learned reader.

In short, the whole matter is a question of evidence, to be tried by the same rules, which are of every day's application in courts of justice, and which, more than any other portion of jurisprudence, are remarkable for being founded upon plain common sense, and fortified by the inductions of the soundest practical philosophy. Is the evidence adduced of the highest kind, or is it of an inferior class? Is the witness of such standing and character that his veracity cannot be suspected, nor his intelligence impeached? Had he sufficient means of ascertaining the facts, which he undertakes to relate? Does he stand contradicted by any other witness; and if so, which of the two is the more credible, and gives the more plausible account of the affair? Is the fact related likely in itself, or is it intrinsically impossible, incredible, or improbable? Is the testimony of the witness corroborated by any circumstantial evidence, which, to borrow the language of the bar, cannot, like man, forget, misrecollect, or wilfully falsify? All these are pertinent enquiries, and according as a history sustains the application of such tests, are we to judge of its certainty and real value.

Much of our historical knowledge, it must be confessed, depends upon evidence which is of a secondary kind, and, therefore, of necessity, less sure. This uncertainty is wrought into the very texture and fabric of all our knowledge of complicated facts; because it does not always happen that we have the best evidence of them; and even the most positively attested relations must be imperfect without the comparison of different statements, some of which must result in hearsay, and therefore partake of the defective nature of mere traditionary information. Very few events have been

disciples, and lastly by Paul, making due allowance for the times in which they lived, I do not agree with him.

recorded, in all their causes, progress, bearings, and effects, by one who was himself the eye-witness of them, through each of these predicaments. Suppose him to be the most credible and intelligent witness that ever testified on earth, yet his narrative must depart more or less from certainty, either by omitting material particulars of which he was ignorant, or by trusting to the information of others, of whose credibility we may be less fully assured. A history, then, will be more or less valuable, in proportion as its proofs consist more or less of that evidence, which is of the highest and best character. Now, these considerations being premised, we say, that modern history resting upon evidence incomparably better than ancient, it therefore deserves the praise of superior certainty and utility. In entering into the details of this proposition, we shall first examine the relative purity of the sources of ancient and modern history; and next inquire if modern historians have not more judiciously employed their advantages.

In all ancient histories, a very striking circumstance is the frequent reliance upon traditions, which relate to events that happened long before the traditions were committed to any authentic record for preservation. Tradition, after all, is little better than common rumor—fame—

*‘Tam ficti pravique tenex, quam nuntia veri;’*

and is never admissible but in the absence of less authentic evidence. Even the most credible traditions, those which are connected with a particular monument, and which do not contradict any written document, frequently have an equivocal authority. From the multitude of such cases, a few instructive examples may be selected. Thus the fable of Attius Navius, who is said to have performed a miraculous feat by cutting a whetstone through with a razor in the reign of Tarquinius Priscus, is attested by the existence of the identical razor and whetstone in the latter days of the republic. In a battle fought by the dictator A. Postumius against the Latins, the twin gods Castor and Pollux were believed to have fought on the side of the Romans; in evidence of which a temple was erected to commemorate the legend, and the horse of Castor left the track of his hoof imprinted upon the surface of a siliceous rock near lake Regillus. An altar was erected to *Ajus Loquens*, a god made for the occasion, being a mysterious voice which warned the Romans against the approaching capture of the city by the Gauls. Tacitus relates that a “*Ficus Ruminalis*,” reputed to be the very tree under which Romulus and Remus were suckled, existed in the Comitium more than eight hundred and forty years afterwards, to attest the fact to those who were credulous enough to believe it. Greek examples without number to the same effect might be cited; but we content ourselves with Roman ones, because the books in which they are found are

I do not admit that I am dishonest, much less that I am bribed to defend an imposture; and yet I feel no "hostili-

more familiar to readers in general, and to ourselves in particular. The curious student may see a specimen of them in the "*Memoirs de l'Academie des inscriptions*," (tom. vi.) a collection of pieces, which, out of France, is not prized so highly as it deserves to be.

"These traditions do sometimes, it is true, corroborate some credible fact, as the battle and the invasion in the second and third of the above instances; but, as in the first and fourth, they are as often attached to fables; and of the whole, we may say with Tully, '*Nihil debet esse in philosophia commentitiis fabellis loci.*' And we learn from them how easy it is for numerous interests, such as the purposes of superstition, national vanity, and even the trifling passions of individuals, to give rise to traditions which only serve to perpetuate falsehood. This it is, which has conferred dignity, and even divinity, upon the origin of empires. '*Datur hæc venia antiquitati, ut, miscendo humana divinis, primordia urbium augustiora faciat.*' This it is, which has poured such a blaze of holiness around all that is obscure, all that is suspicious, in the remoteness of antiquity. Scarce was there a single ancient nation, but could point you to a deity for its founder. Nay, lying tradition traces the origin of Romans, English, French, Turks, and Germans, each by separate derivations, down from the all-prolific Trojans.

"Reliance upon tradition, secondary evidence, and other imperfect proofs, is too common throughout all ancient history. But the fault assumes its most obnoxious form in the early Greek accounts of foreign nations. They seem to be a sort of triumph to fraud and credulity. At that day, the examination of a foreign land was no inconsiderable enterprise; and immediate reputation was the consequence to the intelligent traveller, who safely returned from his wanderings. It was thus that the fairest flowers were gathered by Herodotus and Xenophon, by Pythagoras, Democritus, and Plato, to adorn the works they severally published. Sometimes the inspection of original annals, but more frequently the conversation of Egyptian priests, or Persian magi, or some other equally unsafe authority, was the only source of the stranger's historical information. '*The Greeks,*' said the most perfect of ancient historians, '*admire only their own perfections;*' "*sua tantum mirantur.*" Still they had an ardent, an enterprising curiosity; but it was too often a morbid appetite for novelties, indulged without sufficient discrimination as to the objects of pursuit, or the means of gratification. Oftentimes they seemed to enquire, not to judge, but to believe. At any rate, their foreign histories abound with errors and legendary falsehoods. Hence arise the mistakes contained in the classical accounts of the Jews in Tacitus and Justin, who doubtless copied the Greek historians.

ty to the Christian religion," as I understand it. But, at the same time, I must confess, I am unable to distinguish

Hence the clashing and confusion of the traditions with regard to the Persians in the 'Persæ' of Æschylus, in Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon. And if we may credit so competent a judge as Strabo, the loquacious Greeks were not to be trusted in their accounts of other foreign countries, which Lucian has so keenly satirized in his 'True History.' Indeed, their uncertainty is very generally admitted by the critics; and the attempt to reconcile them has engaged and baffled the most persevering industry, and the most enlightened genius. So imperfect and erroneous was the knowledge of the Greeks concerning the Barbarians, that is, every people but themselves, during the golden age of their literature, and until after the conquests of Alexander.

"The same fault, of neglecting to pay proper attention to the evidence of alleged facts, vitiates the domestic history of Greece. Without going into a minute analysis of this proposition, which would occupy too much space and time, let us believe some of the most learned and irreproachable among the ancients themselves. Strabo, in the place already cited, testifies to the fact; and Thucydides, who set the example of a better proceeding, even apologizes for not being a fabulist. The history, as well as the philosophy, of Greece, previous to the reign of Cyrus, was identified with works of imagination. The historians who succeeded, from Cadmus, the Milesian, to Herodotus, if we may rely on the universal belief of the ancients, with the blood of the poets of the age before them, inherited also the license of poetic fancy. The historical memoirs of that period were perplexed, interrupted, and often equivocal; and writers supplied by fables or conjecture, the numerous deficiencies, which essentially belong to all traditional relations. Partly from this suspicious character of preceding historians, though more, indeed, from his own admirable eloquence, Herodotus was esteemed the father of history. His work we may therefore consider a favorable specimen of what the Greeks effected in history, previous to the publication of Thucydides. In all facts, which came under personal observation, his veracity is unquestioned; but elsewhere, the absence of original documents, in depriving him of the only proper source of history, has exposed him to the reproach of succeeding writers. But for this, Cicero would not have hazarded the expression, that the works of Herodotus and Theopompus contain innumerable fables; '*innumerabiles fabulæ*;' nor would Juvenal have made the remark so often quoted,

'Creditor olim

Velificatus Athos, et quicquid Græcia mendax  
Audet in historia.'

"It was not until the most vigorous age of Grecian genius, that, in the



this religion from pure morality, or at least all of it that I would undertake to defend, or think it of any conse-

hands of Thucydides and Xenophon, the contemporary domestic history exhibited any pretensions to judgment, research, and, by consequence, certainty.

"As to the Romans, most of their knowledge of foreign nations, previous to the last days of the republic, was derived from the Greeks. '*Abest enim historia litteris nostris*,' says Tully. Their first domestic historian, Fabius Pictor, flourished more than five hundred years after the supposed era of the building of Rome, and much of the earlier history of the city is involved in doubt and obscurity. Even if this were not the express admission of Livy and other equally competent critics, yet the contradictory statements of the most important events, the perplexed and broken series of their chronology, and the many relations in their histories, which are confessedly fabulous and legendary, would remove all hope of certainty in the early Roman historians. The attention of scholars has been recently drawn to this point by the writings of Niebuhr and Wachsmuth; but the same things were discussed many years ago, in some valuable dissertations, by MM. Sallier and Pouilly, in the French "*Memoires*" (tom. vi.) The essays of the latter, especially, are sensible, clear, and direct; his arguments are convincing, and his illustrations numerous, and pregnant with conclusions. It is not our purpose to consider the subject at length; but a cursory view of it is too pertinent to be passed over entirely.

"It is admitted that, except treaties and laws, resolutions of the senate or votes of the people, and insulated inscriptions, all engraved upon public monuments or tables of brass or stone, the early Roman history, if preserved at all, must have been preserved in the records called "*annales maximi*" or "*commentarii pontificum*." These consisted, according to Cicero, of public annals, composed yearly by the "*pontifex maximus*," from the foundation of the city ("*ab initio rerum Romanarum*") down to the time of P. Mucius, in which the memory of important events was preserved for the information of posterity. Now there is no doubt that such a record was, for a certain period, carefully compiled in Rome; but was it commenced at so early a period, and if so, how long did the genuine record exist? We reply, first, it is wholly incredible that it went back so far, because in those ancient times, when laws and treaties were preserved only upon tables of brass and stone, there could not be either the disposition or the means to write such a circumstantial account of events as Livy, Plutarch, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, give us; and secondly, if there was such a record, it perished long before any history was composed from the materials it furnished. Cicero, twice in his works, refers to the ancient "*annales maximi*" as existing in his time. In one of these passages he says, nothing can be

quence for mankind to believe ; hence I suppose the difference between me and Philo Veritas is merely verbal,

more delightful to peruse ; a text which has greatly puzzled the commentators ; for the words, 'Nihil, potest esse jucundius,' are plainly written in all the manuscripts ; and the critics appear to be agreed that Tully could not mean what he said ; and therefore, some are for substituting the word 'jejunius ;' and others for slyly inserting a negative particle, so as to read 'injucundius.' Their industry, we think, could well have been spared on this occasion. They forgot the taste of Cicero for antiquities, and his pride in the historical greatness of his country. For if the books of which he spoke contained a pretended record of the early history of Rome, as we find it in Livy, we can readily conceive that he took pleasure in reading it ; for it is throughout, every body must admit, as entertaining as a romance, and probably as veracious too.

"The truth is, Plutarch expressly says, that a work of that name existed, but pronounces it to be a forgery. And how could it be otherwise ? Clodius Albinus, as cited by Plutarch, Livy, and Plutarch himself, all declare that the genuine old "*annales maximi*" were burnt by the Gauls when they sacked the city. And various circumstances confirm this account. For instance, the "*annales maximi*" contained, as we learn from Dionysius, what no Roman ever believed ; as that Romulus was the son of Æneas ; that Remus built four cities, Rome, Anchisa, Capua, and Ænea ; and the exploded fables of Hercules, and the kings of Alba, which Livy also declares to be false. Again, neither the chronology of Rome, nor the consular "*fasti*" are settled, even to a probability ; as Livy and Cicero both state in express terms ; which could not be, if the "*annales maximi*" existed. The most important events in ancient Roman history are uncertain, and many of them are what Taylor calls 'ambulatory stories,' that is, facts told of several cities, and in the present case evidently copied from Greek histories. Finally, the first native historian of Rome, Fabius Pictor, instead of recurring to the "*annales maximi*," which he undoubtedly would have done if the book existed, professedly copied Diocles Peparæthius, a foreigner and a Greek. These proofs, which might easily be extended, corroborate the statement of Clodius Albinus, if it stood in need of any other support than the opinions of Plutarch and Livy.

"Such is the state of the case, with respect to the early history of Rome. And the sources of information of many subsequent historians were fallacious and insufficient. Prominent among them were the "*libri libri*," and the "*laudationes mortuorum*." But the imperfection of his materials extorts frequent complaints from Livy. And Cicero says, the "*laudationes*" introduced much falsity into the Roman history ; because they described false triumphs, fictitious consulates, and genealogies fabricated to gratify

after all ; for he would say that I have discarded every thing essential to christianity but its name, and what I

family pride. But the leisure consequent on the third Punic war, together with the cultivation of Grecian arts and letters, increased the number and added to the value of Roman historians. From this period, the annals of the republic are probable and coherent ; but it was not until long afterwards, that history was successfully cultivated by the citizens of Rome. For the sources of history, the writer then had, in addition to private memoirs and the materials before mentioned, the acts and public despatches of generals and magistrates, and the records of the senate.

“ It thus appears how slowly, both in Greece and Rome, but especially in the latter, history assumed even the semblance of veracity. But the sources of knowledge increase, both in extent and purity, as literature approaches to perfection ; and perhaps, therefore, the materials of ancient history, in the most experienced ages of modern learning, were capable of producing the highest degree of moral certainty. That this is not the fact ; that the utmost perfection to which ancient history could possibly attain, is far short of modern accuracy, will best appear by reference to some of those positive advantages, which are peculiar to modern times.

“ Foremost in the list, stands the art of printing, that wonderful invention, whose influence over the whole range of human affairs almost defies measurement or estimation. By means of this, the indigence of the ancients in materials is converted into the most exuberant plenteousness. By multiplying and diffusing the evidence of events, it has removed the most penetrating defect of ancient history. The knowledge of what is passing around us, or of what has taken place, is not confined to the erudition of the few ; nor does it live only in the broken, impure, and perplexed rumours of the multitude. Histories and original memoirs of every degree of merit and pretension, from the splendid quarto to the modest duodecimo ; public records, in such voluminous abundance in every country, that the industry of a life would not exhaust their contents ; parliamentary debates and executive documents, printed in such profusion that we are more likely to sink under the weight of our riches, than suffer from their deficiency ; periodical works, annual, quarterly, monthly, weekly, and daily, whose end is ‘ to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time its form and pressure,’—such are the sources of historical knowledge, which exist in modern times, and which, by means of the press, are multiplied to an indefinite extent, and beyond the possibility of destruction. How striking is the contrast in ancient times, as to which, no small portion of the most important facts are necessarily believed on the personal credit of a single historian, unsupported by monuments, unaided by any subsidiary evidence. It needs no labored discussion to show that

call christianity would be better expressed, and more likely to be understood, to be called morality. Be it so. If we

this single advantage, the possession of the press, settles at once the question of the relative certainty of ancient and modern historians, so far as regards the materials and sources of history.

“Nor is there any more doubt concerning the second branch of our enquiry, namely, whether we have not employed our advantages to greater profit than the ancients did theirs. Indeed, superior critical skill would be the necessary consequence of the general diffusion of knowledge, which the invention of printing has produced. It has infused life, health, and vigor, into the whole system of literature and science. Not only, therefore, are more original memoirs preserved from dispersion and loss in the libraries of the rich and of public bodies, but the literary ambition of the whole world is awakened and sustained by the facility of acquiring knowledge. Hence arises the authority, the efficiency, if not the being, of sound public opinion, that sublime power, which corrects error, subdues presumption, cherishes genius, and consecrates truth, marking for infamy or glory every thought and action of life, which comes within the sphere of its operation. The utility of this power being measured by the diffusion of learning, its beneficial influence must evidently be greater upon modern, than it could ever have been upon ancient history.

“Besides, in our day, the influence of public opinion is not only apparent in the bosom of a single nation, but the false judgments of any one people are modified and corrected by the criticisms of other nations. It is obvious that this circumstance is peculiarly conducive to the certainty of history, by making the partialities of each community the corrective of those around it. The public sentiment of a single people may easily be vitiated; but the prejudices will not be likely to extend through other states, whose interests are distinct, whose taste is peculiar, and whose national partialities are watchful and alert. Truth alone can endure the keen scrutiny, to which all historical writings are now subjected. The separate states of modern Europe and America constitute a vast community of nations, whose peculiarities act and react upon them as nations, precisely in the same way, followed by similar beneficial results, as single individuals improve each other, by contact and intercourse in society.

“Something analogous to this, it is true, might be imagined to exist in the Greek republics; and in the Roman empire, after it had come to embrace so many distinct nations. But the case was widely different from what it is now. Lacedæmon was jealous of Athens; and Thebes of both; and Asia Minor and the Islands had interests apart from each of them; but still the feeling and character of the inhabitants of all these various regions were Greek, their taste was Greek, their spirit and philosophy were Greek. The

can only understand each other in regard to the thing, we shall not contend about the name. I mean, I am not

influence which one city exerted over the peculiarities of another was greatly circumscribed and limited by this consideration, of their community of language and general national character. Their case more nearly resembles that of the Italian republics of the middle age, or of the several states in our confederacy, or of the Spanish American republics of the south, than it does that of the great family of nations of the European race. And the overwhelming influence of the city of Rome, towards which, all the ambition of the various nations that composed the empire centred and converged, and by which all their tastes were controlled, modified the operation of the power of which we are speaking, upon the literature of the later Romans. Every thing is now radically changed. We have ceased to think that there is but one blessed region wherein genius is vernacular and patrimonial, and in whose embellishment nature exhausted all the might and fertility of her invention. There is no longer a people, who can claim, with Rome, the insolent prerogative of universal empire; or with Athens, the exclusive heritage of taste, of genius, or of elegance. The division of the literary world into distinct languages and communities is attended with this useful effect; and each nation has learned to prize its own excellence, without despising or neglecting whatever is learned or ingenious elsewhere. History derives from this comprehensive and enlightened curiosity, this enlarged literary tolerance, a certainty, variety, and copiousness, which were hardly known to the ancients even in speculation.

"Apprehensive lest we may prove tedious, we shall confine ourselves to remarking upon but one topic more, under this head. The value of modern history is enhanced, we conceive, by the greater research, which is the consequence of greater scientific attainments. Science may repress the spirit and exuberance of fancy; but it will, at the same time, compensate for this inconvenience by the bestowment of still greater benefits, having peculiar influence upon the certainty of history. By means of experience, we are disciplined to habits of circumspection, of hesitancy, shall we say of distrust? Every day which adds to our knowledge and judgment, diminishes our credulity, and our tendency to rely upon imperfect proofs; since it teaches us a delicate, timorous, and laborious estimate of the grounds of moral evidence. It is an advantage, which the mere lapse of time, the simple circumstance of living at a particular age of the world, confers upon us. Experience instructs us in the errors of our fathers; it discloses the various passions, interests, and caprices, which may delude us into false judgments; and it also reveals the means of guarding the candor and simplicity of the understanding. Here we obviously excel the ancient historians. Not only do we examine facts with more penetrating discernment,

hostile to the principle, "to do as I would be done by;" and this is what I mean by christianity, when I say I am not hostile to it.\*

I now proceed to examine the testimonies, as was proposed.

After referring to his authorities, (which I here pass over,) our learned author says, "These authorities, though I have most of them separately, are best found in the collections of Cotelierius, and in the many volumed folio, entitled *Bibliotheca veterum patrum ut et Hereticorum*, of which there are two or three editions, the maxima the best. I do not *now* possess that work, but I pledge myself to any adversary, to produce the original of any reference I rely

but we also purify our opinions and conclusions from those numerous errors, the sole support of which is prejudice, and their origin credulity; there is no longer overpowering authority in names; for we learn to see error as it is, cleared from the lustre of false beauty, the factitious good thrown around it by party, by fashion, and by prescription. Whenever a work of high pretension is now published, how strict is the scrutiny to which it is subjected. Witness the universal alertness of criticism excited by the appearance of Sir Walter Scott's '*Napoleon*,' which is read, studied, examined, all over Europe and America; and, since Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands, are no longer exempt from the illumination of English literature, we may add, all over the civilized world. The spirit of unsparing investigation, which characterizes modern history, is the pledge and guarantee of its greater certainty; for it exposes the interested praises or censure of the contemporary chronicler, discloses his prejudices in their naked deformity, and reveals to the world those monuments of truth, which time had overturned in his flight, and left to lie concealed under the obscure and dusty ruins of the past."

\* It is evident, however, that all religionists do mean something more by religion, and especially by christianity, than simple morality. Hence, although I publish the above as delivered, being *then* exactly my views, yet I think it best to call things by their proper names. And, as I can no longer see any thing true in christianity, aside from morality, I have no longer any use for the christian name. I am perfectly satisfied that all mankind are just as well off without that name as with it. Jesus of Nazareth, if such a man ever lived, (which is doubtful,) is the same to me as any other man, and nothing more.

on, with a specification of the edition which I actually use for the purpose, and the page where it is to be found.

The history of the Jewish transactions, and the state of the Jews from Augustus to Tiberius, are treated of by their agent and ambassador Philo Judæus: generally, from the earliest times to the time of Trajan, by Josephus: their theological opinions, are to be found in the Talmudists, and the Mishna; and in the Jewish history of Joseph Ben Gorion, or Josippon.

Philo Judæus was cotemporary with the period assigned to the life of Jesus Christ, and the fair conclusion from his works is, that he was among the Jews at Jerusalem or at Rome, at the very period of the crucifixion.

Josephus was born about two years after the crucifixion.

The mishna dates about A. D. 180. The Talmud A. D. 500. There are two or three very doubtful and obscure passages that Lardner would press into the service if he could.

Joseph Ben Gorion wrote, according to Lardner, A. D. 930. So also says Basnage.

*Of Christ and of the Christians, none of these Jewish accounts take any notice. Nor of the prodigies, or of the public excitation said by the evangelists to have accompanied that event. Circumstances so strange, as not easily to have been passed over by an historian, had they really happened.*

Let us suppose an examination in court.\* One witness

\* "*Counsel.* This is John Nokes, if your honor pleases: we call him to prove the presence of Thomas Stiles, in the room, at the time. John Nokes, were you at the place in question, at the time stated?

*John Nokes.* Yes.

*Counsel.* Did you see Thomas Stiles there at that time?

*John Nokes.* Yes, I did.

*Counsel.* How do you know it was Thomas Stiles?

testifies positively to a fact, the presence of a certain person, well known, at a certain time and place. Others who were present at the same time and place, who could not have avoided noticing this person, had he been present, unite in saying, that the person in question was not pre-

*John Nokes.* Because, he had on a white coat, blue silk jacket, red breeches, and green colored stockings, and I could not help remarking him.

*Counsel.* Do you know the person of Thomas Stiles?

*John Nokes.* Perfectly well.

*Counsel.* Who were in the room at the time?

*John Nokes.* Several people were there: Mr. A. B., Mr. C. D., Mr. E. F., Mr. G. H.

*Counsel.* Call Mr. A. B.: Mr. A. B. were you at the frolic at the time and place John Nokes speaks of?

*Mr. A. B.* Yes, I was there.

*Counsel.* Did you see Thomas Stiles there?

*Mr. A. B.* No, I did not.

*Counsel.* You hear his dress described, did you see any body there so dressed.

*Mr. A. B.* No, there was nobody there dressed in that manner. I know Thomas Stiles well; I am sure if he had been there I should have seen him; especially in such a dress.

*Counsel.* How long did you stay in the room?

*Mr. A. B.* I staid there the whole time; I came there before John Nokes arrived, who came late; and I was there when John Nokes went away.

*Counsel.* Is it possible for Thomas Stiles to have been there, and you not see him?

*Mr. A. B.* No, it is not possible. I know him well: there was no person so dressed at any time whatever while he was there.

*Counsel.* Call Mr. C. D., and the other witnesses.

(They all depose to the same purpose as Mr. A. B.)

*Counsel.* Here are four witnesses, who swear positively that Thomas Stiles was not at the place, at the time sworn to by John Nokes. They all say that he could not possibly have been there without their knowledge; that there is no room for mistake in this matter. These are men of good character, who have no interest to deceive. Under these circumstances, is it possible to give credit to John Nokes, who has a manifest and strong inclination to make us believe that Thomas Stiles was there? Here are four evidences unimpeachable, who contradict John Nokes: can you believe him?



sent. Such united testimony of several, under such circumstances, although negative, must destroy the testimony of one individual, though positive. I then ask, in the words of my learned author, "Is it possible, respectable men of high standing and character in the nation, could have given an account, professedly a fair, ample, and true one, of the events of the very period in question, and pass over the strange events related by these evangelists? Who Philo Judæus, and Josephus were, we know; and we know their standing in society; who the authors of the books ascribed to the evangelists were, we know not.

"I am aware, that some very obscure passages in the Mishna, and the Talmud, are construed as relating to Jesus Christ, but I am satisfied to refer the reader to Lardner's extracts from Lightfoot. See Lard. Works, vol. 7, p. 138, et seq.

"But is it true that Josephus never mentions Jesus Christ?

"It is true; I refer to the summary of the argument in 7 Lard. 120, et seq., which leaves not the slightest room for doubt about this passage in Josephus being an impudent and clumsy forgery. I deny that there is a clergyman now in Europe ignorant enough to defend it. Gibbon refers to the conclusive objections of La Fèvre in the edition of Josephus put forth by Havercamp, and to the masterly reply of the Abbe Longerue to Daubuz, in the *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*, tom. 7, p. 237—288. The latter book I do not possess. Havercamp's edition of Josephus, in two vols. fol. 1726, is now before me. Pages 189 to 283 of the second volume, are occupied by the disquisitions at length, pro and con, of various authors, on the authenticity of this passage in Josephus relating to Jesus Christ; (*Antiquit. Jud.* book 8, ch. 3, sec. 3,) beginning with the defence of it, by Ch. Daubuz, prefaced by Grabe.

The letter of Tanaquil Faber to John Chabrol, (response sans replique,) is found as Gibbon cites it, p. 267—273. Blondel, Leclerc, and Bp. Warburton, also condemn the passage. If any man will give himself the trouble of carefully examining this controversy in Havercamp and Lardner, as I have done, and can then deliberately assert that he thinks the passage genuine, I can only say I should entertain strong suspicions of his judgment or veracity. The fact is, the passage was first cited by Eusebius, Hist. Ecc. lib. 2, ch. 23 ; that notorious and unprincipled falsifier of all history—that forger on principle, and by profession. The passage was not in the editions of Josephus known to Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, or Origen. Eusebius first produced it. The passage is *his* forgery ; in like manner *he* forged the letter of Abgarus, of Edessa, to Jesus Christ, and the answer, and he contributed, by forged additions, and wilful misquotations of Tertullian, to give currency to the silly fable about the Meletenian legion, whose prayers saved the army of Marcus Aurelius from dying of thirst. Yet is this Eusebius the main source of Christian ecclesiastical history for more than three centuries ! Is it possible for any tyro in historical criticism to consider such a man as Eusebius, professing and practising these forgeries, authority to be relied on for any fact whatever ? I had almost forgotten the forged letter of Pontius Pilate, and the proposal of Tiberius, which Justin Martyr and Eusebius endeavored to palm upon the credulous Christians. As to the passage relating to Paul of Tarsus, in Longinus, Dr. Hudson first received it from L. A. Zacagni, an Italian, who said he copied it from a MS. in the Vatican. Fabricius considered it as spurious, and I know of no author who defends it. At this period of Christian forgery, the presumption is against every Christian assertion, not intrinsically credible.

“Having now cleared the road from Eusebian rubbish, I may proceed to other authors.”

One important fact is, to know who the witnesses were, and at what time they lived.

*Suetonius.* This writer became secretary to the Emperor Adrian, about A. D. 118. In his life of Claudius, it is thought by some that he referred to the christians, though this is doubtful;\* but in his life of Nero, chapter 16, he says, that in this reign, “The christians were punished, a class of men professing a new and pernicious superstition.”†

“Tacitus, who wrote about the same time with Suetonius and Pliny, says, in the 15th book of his annals, chapter 44, that nothing could prevent the suspicion of having fired the city, resting on Nero: ‘To suppress, therefore, this common rumor, Nero procured others to be accused, and inflicted exquisite punishments on those people, who, in abhorrence of their crimes, were commonly called Christians. They were so called from Christ, who was publicly executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius. This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again and spread not only from Judea, the source of this evil, but reached the city also; whither flew from all quarters, all things vile and shameful, and where they find shelter and encouragement. At first, those only were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect; afterwards, on their information, a great number were apprehended and convicted, not so much of having caused the fire, as of hatred to the hu-

\* See Suetonius. vit. Claud. ch. 25. See also the Correspondent, vol. v. p. 315.—But Christian writers have rare digestion.

† The latin of this and other quotations will be found in the Correspondent. I thought they would not be useful to the common reader, and they are therefore omitted.

man race.' He goes on to describe the punishments; 'at length (says Tacitus) these men, though really criminal, and deserving of exemplary punishment, began to be pitied, as being destroyed, not for the sake of the public welfare, but to gratify the cruelty of one man.'"

These passages prove undoubtedly that a sect of persons called christians, were known at Rome in the days of Nero, which must have been before the destruction of Jerusalem; viz. A. D. 68. Jerusalem was destroyed A. D. 70. Though these writers, who here speak of them, flourished about the close of the first, or the commencement of the second century. But it seems, judging from these writers, they bore a universally bad character: so bad, that it was worth the while of Nero to select them as the fittest persons to load with the obloquy of his own crime. The bad character of the early christians seems to be pretty generally admitted; though if we had no proof of the fact, except what comes from their opponents, it would not be very conclusive; for they criminated and recriminated each other. The orthodox laid these practices with which they were generally charged, at the door of the christians, whom they called heretics; but they were all heretics to each other.\*

\* "These passages, however, prove no more, than the prevailing opinions concerning the christians in the time of Tacitus and Suetonius; the *On dits* of the day: for the christians were insignificant and too obscure (except from their bad conduct) to make it worth while to notice them in such a history or biography as that of Tacitus or Suetonius. These extracts do not apply to, and prove nothing in corroboration of the accounts given by the evangelists.

"Pliny the younger, wrote about the time of Tacitus and Suetonius. There are no means of deciding that the one wrote much before the other. If the letter of Pliny and the letter of Trajan be genuine, they prove exactly what the foregoing extracts from Tacitus and Suetonius prove, and no more: viz. that the christians began to attract notice in Bythinia at that time. Pliny, Epist. lib. X. Epis. 97. Melmoth's Pliny is so common, that I

There is not an individual, who is even tolerably well read in ecclesiastical history, that does not know that the following propositions are as well established as any propositions can be established by historical evidence. And to those who are satisfied with these, and search no further, but are tolerant towards all, even to those who set no bounds to their enquiries, as well as others, I would barely submit these remarks; but with them I have no controversy. I can address them in the language of *truth*, which will apply in some measure to myself, as well as to my learned friend. "Many of them have labored honestly and diligently to understand in all its bearings this great theological question; and having done so—if the prejudices of early education, the force of honored example, the constant admonitions and public professions of parents and preceptors, wise and good, and toward the youthful objects of their fostering care, kind and disinterested, have rivetted on *their* minds the theological belief which much and laborious reading and much and anxious reflection have taught *me* to reject—I can allow for the circumstances that operate on them, and not on myself; I know the temptations to the clerical profession, from the world's reverence, however based on the ignorance of the multitude, or the prudent stimulation or timid hypocrisy

do not think I need copy the letter and answer here. These letters are cited by Tertullian and by Eusebius: as to Eusebius, he is absolutely no authority. But we know the dread of Trajan as to assemblies of the people, and as to secret assemblies in particular, and the letters are in harmony with the characters of the time. But forgeries by the christians were so numerous and so daring, when there was no art of printing, no public press to check them, that suspicion is reasonably alive where there is any circumstance to support and corroborate it. The expression of Pliny, that the christians were wont, *hymnos Christo quasi Deo dicare* [*to recite hymns to Christ as to God,*] expresses what could not have been matter of fact in Pliny's time, but what might have been so 150 or 200 years afterward.

of the wise ; I can understand the overwhelming force of the motives that decide its votaries ; I can excuse their professions, because I can account for their prejudices, and I am not blind to the powerful obstacles that oppose a change of opinion. It is not against the learned class of men, who are, I firmly believe, useful, honest, and sincere, in proportion to their learning, that I direct my harsh tirades ; it is against the ignorant, the insolent, the intolerant among the calvinistic professors particularly ; and against the idle and comparatively illiterate episcopalians—it is against all those, and numerous they are, who are so ready to call out the bigotry of the country, and—

To deal damnation through the land  
On each they judge a foe ;

and who, having no tolerance themselves, have no right to expect it from others. *Bellum internecinum*, then, to those, and those only, who inscribe it on their own flag.

“ Throwing down, not the gauntlet, but the glove of courteous controversy to those who, being qualified, are willing to take it up, I proceed with my argument, and state my propositions, which I consider as now settled upon the basis of strong probable evidence.

“ The Nazarenes and Ebionites—the Alogi of Epiphanius, entertained no such differences of opinions as to the nature and character of Jesus Christ, as to compel us to consider them other than as one and the same sect of christians.

“ They were the earliest Jewish converts.

“ They were generally considered as heretics by the writers of the close of the second, and the third centuries ; not on account of their opinions respecting Christ, but on account of their judaizing. Hieronym. Augustino, Ep. 89.

“They disbelieved the pre-existence and the divinity of Jesus Christ.

“The *oi pleistoi*, the *tous pollous*, the *to plethos*, the *oi polloi* of Justin Martyr, Athanasius, Origen; the simplices and ideotæ of Tertullian, the simplices credentium of Jerom, the major pars credentium of Tertullian, the great mass of professing christians did not believe the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, for three centuries after Christ. They would have been shocked at such a doctrine until the council of Nice. Scandalizare, expavescere, *tarassein*, are the words used by Tertullian and Origen, when speaking of the effect on the multitude, which modern orthodoxy would in their day have produced.

“The first notice or suggestion of Jesus Christ being considered as God in any manner, is to be found in Justin Martyr, who died A. D. 163.

“Athanasius, Chrysostom, and others of the fathers, express their opinion that the divinity of Christ was a doctrine purposely kept back by the apostles, lest it should too much offend the prejudices of the early christians.

“Nor was this doctrine established as the full belief of the orthodox church till the council of Nice.

“Nor during the three first centuries, were the persons who held the modern unitarian opinions respecting Christ enumerated among the heretics. For, in fact, these opinions prevailed among the greater number of christians, Jew and Gentiles. The personification and apotheosis of the Logos, and the equality and consubstantiality of Jesus Christ, were the gradual and cautious innovations of the philosophizing christians, not generally prevalent till after the Nicene meeting.

“All this is made out in the three first sections of Priestley's church history, in his controversy with Horsley, and

his history of early opinions, by proofs so abundant, as to leave no room for controversy at the present day. The game that Horsley played, is now well understood ; and it was not much misunderstood at the time. He came forward a candidate for church promotion ; and was willing to risk his reputation, and cover his ignorance, by his impudence.

“ If these propositions be well founded, and I appeal to such as have attended to these controversies, without the slightest fear of contradiction, a strong suspicion arises, that the phrase *hymnos Christo quasi deo*, could not have applied to the christians of that day ; and was meant to serve the cause of orthodoxy, and the whole passage is an interpolation by later theologians.\*

“ But I acknowledge, the latinity of the letter in question, and Trajan’s answer, as well as the sentiments uttered, the subjects treated, and the manner of considering them, furnish no confirmation of this strong suspicion, *si non e vero, e ben trovato*.

“ It proves, however, no more at the utmost, than that christianity began to gain ground in Bythinia, when Pliny was in office in that part of Asia Minor.

“ There is no doubt, but the sect of christians were known at the close of the first century ; but we have no proof of the existence of this sect, anterior to the evidence furnished by Pliny, Tacitus, and Suetonius. This evidence is general, not particular : it fully proves, I think, the existence of a very abandoned and depraved set of men called christians about the years 100—110 ; but this is all. I regret the evidence compels me to use these epithets, which seem applicable to the mass or body of

\* See the preceding note.



men so called, about that time, whoever, or how many soever may have been the exceptions.

“Having now done with the Jewish and heathen records, I proceed to the ancient fathers of the church, on whose authority the authenticity of our present gospels rests.

“But on bringing our witnesses into court, let us see whether we can establish the respectability of their characters for veracity, good morals, good sense, and competent learning. The men by whose testimony the authenticity of the four evangelists must stand or fall, ought to be witnesses in all respects unexceptionable. Let us see, then, what the most learned and able of the christian writers have declared as their deliberate opinions concerning the ancient fathers of the church.

“On this head, I believe my researches will enable me to furnish a more full, though brief account of the ancient fathers, than your readers will elsewhere find ; and I hope that they will bear in mind, that in proportion to the uncommon character and importance of the fact to be proved, such ought to be the full and unsuspected nature of the evidence adduced to prove it. We cannot fix the wisdom of one blockhead by the testimony of another ; or prove the veracity of a liar by those who habitually practice falsehood and deception. Let us have unimpeached and unimpeachable testimony, or tell us why you cannot procure it.”

Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, were contemporary with each other. The whole of their writings, perhaps, were included between the years 100 and 120 of the christian era. But Tacitus certainly speaks of the christians which existed in the days of Nero, at the time of the burning of Rome, and therefore his writing, if authentic,\*

\* But see Note A. Appendix.

proves something more than what the essayist admits ; viz. the bare existence of men called christians “about the years 100—110 ;” but also the existence of such men in the year 68 of the christian era. But even all this does not go to establish a single fact as to the extraordinary accounts in the New Testament. Writers may incidentally speak of the Shakers, and what does it prove ? Does it confirm the truth of any of the miracles recorded in the Shaker bible ? Certainly not. It only proves the existence of such a people. That is all. So the incidental mention of the christians by Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, barely prove the existence of a people called christians at the times of which they *speak*, as well as at the time in which they *lived*.

In our next I shall speak of the *ancient fathers*, as they are called, *of the Christian Church* ; and I regret that their characters do not stand more fair ; as the credibility of the gospels very much depends on the credibility of those through whose hands they come, down to the time of the oldest MSS now extant.

## LECTURE IV.

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### OF THE ANCIENT FATHERS.\*

“ Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thes. v. 21.

THE truth of the Christian religion depends on the authenticity of the books that profess to give an account of it ; for if these books be forgeries—or falsely ascribed to the pretended authors of them—or if no certainty exists who were the authors of them—or when they were written—or where—or in what language—if they were disputed, controverted, denied, rejected, by a large part of the public at the first and earliest age of their appearance—if they bear internal, as well as external evidence of mistakes and contradictions, of omissions, fabrications, and interpolations—if no care was taken to verify the evidence of their authenticity by the persons who first collected and sanctioned them as genuine—if the persons who so selected and sanctioned them, convened not for that purpose, but to serve the sectarian tenets of the theological party to which they belonged, and to promote their own secular and party interests, and to curry favor with a ruling monarch—then, in all, or in any of these cases, satisfactory evidence of the truth and authenticity of these Christian books is wanting ; no reasonable man at the present day ought to accept of them as genuine ; no honest man ought to gain his livelihood by supporting them.

\* [This lecture, also, is wholly borrowed, except what is inclosed in brackets.]

But I aver, and I will prove, if I live and have leisure, that the *four gospels*, as they are called, are, in fact, liable to all these objections.

The historical authenticity of these books depends on the testimony, direct and indirect, in their favor, of a class of writers usually known as the *ancient fathers of the Christian church*. It will, therefore, be proper to enquire who were these ancient fathers—what credit is due to them for skill and acumen in distinguishing forged histories from genuine ones—what credit is due to them for honesty, veracity, and good faith, as well as good sense and intelligence; and whether it be safe to adopt the evidences of our religious belief from these writers, and trust our religious journey through life, and our future expectation afterwards, to ignorant and incompetent guides. It will be absolutely necessary, even at the expense of being tedious, to labour this point; if these were wise and honest men, possessing and exercising a sound judgment, and discriminating with caution between the true and false lights of the day—then will the Christian fabric be able to sustain itself on this most important basis; but if these ancient fathers were, in point of learning, good sense, laborious discrimination, and honest proceeding, utterly unfit to be trusted—if they perverted, misquoted, misapplied, defamed, defaced, and destroyed the works of their adversaries, and even those of each other, so generally and so strangely that common sense and common honesty stand equally aghast at their follies and their frauds—(2 and 3 Jortin's Remarks on Eccl. Hist. p. 305,)—if they were, as a class of writers, equally devoid of judgment and veracity, then is there no confidence to be placed in them; their authentications are worthless, and the gospels whose historical evidence rests entirely on these men, must be considered as void of all credible foundation. In giving the ac-

count of these ancient fathers, I shall adduce no testimony but from Christian writers of the very highest standing in the Christian church for learning, honesty, and piety.\*

The book of the very learned Dr. Conyers Middleton, entitled, *a Free Enquiry into the miraculous powers attributed to the Christian church in the three first centuries*, quarto, 1747, although a professor at Cambridge university, is not relished by the orthodox clergy, and, therefore, I do not quote it; but the learning and research of this conclusive publication is such, that to those who will get it on my recommendation, it will supersede all other testimonies to the folly and the falsehood of the ancient fathers. It is, indeed, a very bold and decisive book.

M. DAILLE, a man whose piety, learning, judgment, and impartiality, has never been impeached, wrote a treatise, *De usu Patrum, in judicandis Controversiis*, (the title by which it is usually cited, but it was written in French,) in defence of the Protestant cause against the papists. He lays down, and fully establishes these points, and, for the proofs at length, I refer to his well known treatise on the right use of the fathers, above mentioned:

1. We have very little of the writings of the fathers of the three first centuries.

2. The writings we have treat of matters very different from modern controversies.

3. The writings ascribed to these fathers are not all genuine, but are in great part forged, either anciently or in latter times.

4. The writings of the fathers, which are more truly ascribed to them, have been in many places corrupted;

\* Every thing I read proves to me the truth of Bacon's observation, *maxime habenda pro suspectis, quæ pendent aliquo modo a religione*. Nov. Org. lib. 2. Aph. 29.

through time, ignorance, and fraud, both pious and malicious, both in ancient and modern times.

5. They are hard to be understood by reason of the language and idiom in which they are composed, by reason of the style incumbered with figures, rhetorical flourishes, and logical subtleties; by reason of the terms employed being used in a sense that they will not now bear.

6. When we meet with an opinion clearly delivered in the writings of any of the fathers, we must not from thence conclude it to be the opinion of the writer; for we find them saying things which they did not believe themselves. Whether it be when they report the opinions of some other whom they do not name, as is frequent in their *Commentaries*; or whether it be in disputing against an adversary, when they scruple not to say one thing and believe another; or whether it be when they conceal their own opinion (as in their *Homilies*) in compliance with a part of their readers.

7. There are many instances of their opinions at one time, being at variance with their opinions at another.

8. It is necessary also to enquire, whether the opinion be maintained as necessary, or as probable, and in what degree.

9. Whether it be delivered as the opinion of the writer, or of the church in his day.

10. Whether of the church universal, or of some particular church or churches.

11. Whether by church, the writer means the collective body of *Christians*, or of the *clergy*.

In the second book he maintains these points:

1. That neither the testimony or the doctrines of the fathers are infallible.

2. The fathers are mutually witnesses against each

other, that they are not to be believed absolutely on their own bare word.

3. It appears by their writings, that it was never intended those writings should govern us.

4. They have erred in divers points, both singly and collectively.

5. They have contradicted each other in matters of great importance.

In book 1, chapter 3, he observes, "neither ought we to wonder that those of honest, innocent, and primitive times, made use of those deceits, seeing that for a good end they made no scruple to forge whole books."

In book 1, chapter 6, alleging that the fathers, by way of ECONOMY OF dispensation, often say one thing and mean another, he observes, "Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinaris, (says Jerom,) have written largely against Celsus and Porphyry. Do but observe, says Jerom, their manner of arguing, and what slippery problems they used. They alleged against the Gentiles, not what they believed, but what they thought necessary; *non quod sentiunt, sed quod necesse est dicunt*. Jerom adds, I forbear mentioning the Latin writers, as Tertullian, Cyprian, Minutius, Victorinus, Lactantius, and Hilary, lest I should rather seem to accuse others than defend myself."

Here is, indeed, a sweeping accusation by one of the gang, particeps criminis; for I shall soon show that Jerom was not backward in imitating the example of his pious predecessors. Jerom goes on in continuation of the above passage, justifying his own practice by charging not only St. Paul, but Jesus Christ himself, with the same.\*

Daille was a man of singular eminence among the learned French Protestants: he was born Jan. 1594. He

\* Hieron. in Epist. ad Galat. Epist. 50, ad Pammach. Ad. Aug. Ep. 89.

died Ap. 1670. His book on the *Use of the Fathers*, was published in 1628. It was translated in 1651, by Thomas Smith, of Cambridge; and into Latin by M. Méttayer, of St. Quintin. I have the translation by Mr. T. Smith, from which I quote.

M. BLONDELL, another French Protestant, (in *Epist. ad C. Arnold*, apud *Ouvrages des Scavans*, Ann. 1701,) observes on the subject of creeds, "the second century of christianity, whether you consider the immoderate impudence of impostors, or the deplorable credulity of believers, was a most miserable period, and exceeded all others in pious frauds. To the disgrace of Christianity, there was more aversion to lying, more simplicity in adhering to truth, and more fidelity among profane than among Christian authors."

SCALIGER says of the Christians of those days, "Whatever they deemed conducive to the interests of Christianity, they inserted in their books ;"\* and as he considers nothing relating to the church as certain anterior to Pliny, so he says of the second century, "So inefficacious did they deem the word of God, that they distrusted the success of Christ's kingdom without the aid of lying, that I wish they had been the first to practice it."†

CASAUBON himself says, "I am much grieved to observe, in the early ages of the church, that there were very many who deemed it praiseworthy to assist the divine word with their own fictions; so that the new doctrine might find a readier admittance among the wise men of the Gentiles."‡

\* (Scaligerana, art. Siloe,) omnia qua putabant christianismo conducere, bibliis inseruere.

† Adeo verbum dei inefficax esse consuerunt, ut regnum Christi sine mendacio promoveri, posse diffiderunt, ut qui utinam illi primi mentiri cœperant.

‡ (Exercit. 1; ad Append. p. 54, a.) Illud me vehementer movit, quod



BISHOP STILLINGFLEET, in his *Irenarch*, page 296, says, that antiquity is most defective where it is most useful, viz. in the times immediately after the apostles; for the fathers were deceived with pious frauds, but then it was when they made for the Christians, Origines sacræ, page 29.

BISHOP FELL says, "In the first ages of the church, so extensive was the license of forging, so credulous were the people in believing, that the evidence of transactions was grievously obscured; and not only did the public complain universally, but the church of God in particular lamented with great reason, these mystic times."\* Who does Bishop Fell call the church of God? Were not all these forgeries committed by Christians? Did any heathen condescend to take the trouble off their hands?

To the same purpose Dr. WHITBY, in præfat. ad strict. patr. page 73.

To the same purpose also LE CLERC, *Biblioth. Choise*, tom. iv. p. 315.

"'Tis well known," says Dr. BENNET, (directions for studying the 39 articles, page 66,) "that the apostles creed has received various additions to its original form. The Nicene creed was enlarged by the Constantinopolitan fathers; and has also with respect to the *filiouque*, [and the son,] been interpolated by the Latin church. 'Tis probable that the Latin church hath interpolated the Athanasian creed too with respect to the *filiouque*."

oideam primis ecclesiæ temporibus quam plurimos extitisse, qui facinus palmarium judicabant coelestem veritatem figmentis suis ire adjutum; quo facilius nova illa doctrina gentium.

\* (In præmiss. monit. confess. suppos. Cypriani, page 53,) Tanta fuit primis sæculis fingendi licentia, tam prona in credendo facilitas, ut rerum gestarum fides exinde graviter labora verit: nec orbis tantum terribum, sed et Dei ecclesiæ, de temporibus suis mysticis merito queratur.

BISHOP BURNET hath shown (on the Articles, art. 8, page 106,) that the Athanasian creed was a forgery of the eighth century.

SELDEN, in his notes on Fleta, chapter 5, n. 6, mentions the fraudulent introduction of a rescript of Constantine into the Theodosian code, after that rescript (On the power of Bishops) had been long repealed.

CELSUS (Orig. versus Celsum, lib. 2, page 77,) says, the Christians are perpetually altering and correcting the gospels. That the more ancient fathers of the second and third centuries cite perpetually as genuine, books that are now universally conceded to be forgeries, is acknowledged by Lardner, 2 Credib. pages 109, 383, 423, 431, 500, 505, 508, 521. Dr. Con. Middleton, in his "Free Enquiry," furnishes proof of the same, pages 33, 34.

There is a singular passage in the Chronicon of the African Bishop Victor Muis, who flourished in the sixth century, that confirms the accusation of Celsus. The Abbe Houteville, in his treatise on the Christian religion, cites it, and endeavors to evade the force of it. "The Emperor Anastasius, in the consulship of Messala, ordered the holy gospels to be revised and corrected, as having been composed by men wanting in good sense."\*

PEZRON, in his defence of his book L'Antiquite des Terns, page 224, acknowledges, that among the ancient Christians, lying for God and religion was deemed by many no crime at all, or a very pardonable one, if not meritorious.

The learned Mr. DODWELL, in his Dissert. de Paucit. Martyr. Inter. Dissertationes Cyprianicas, abstains from producing more proofs of ancient Christian forgeries, through his great veneration of the goodness and piety of

~~the~~ Messala Consule, Anastasio Imperatore jubente, ~~dicta~~ <sup>dicta</sup> evangelia, tanquam ab ideotis evangelistis composita, reprehenduntur et emendantur.

several of the fathers ; who were too easy of belief of matters of fact not sufficiently attested.

In fact, the early Christians, from the end of the first to the end of the third century, appear to have had among them a general propensity to lying, fraud, and forgery ; a propensity peculiar to the quarrelsome disputants in theology, and found in no other class of writers.

Dodwell, in his *Dissert. upon Irenæus*, seems to hesitate upon our present gospels. “ We have, at this day, (says he,) certain most authentic ecclesiastical writers of the times, as Clemens Romanus, Barnabas, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, who wrote in the same order wherein I have named them, and after all the writers of the New Testament. But in Hermas you will not find one passage, or any mention of the New Testament, nor in all the rest is any one of the evangelists named. If sometimes they cite passages like those we read in our gospels, you will find them so changed, and for the most part so interpolated, that it cannot be known whether they produced them out of ours, or some apocryphal gospels. Nay, they sometimes cite passages which most certainly are not in our present gospels.”

All the writings ascribed to these early fathers are far from being authentic, nor are the dates or times of their writings perfectly settled. They reach from an early date in the second century to about 120, according to orthodox computations. In none of them is there any distinct reference to the gospels now received, or to the authors of them, which would have been next to impossible if those books had been then known. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, never said they wrote any thing—none of the gospels ascribed to them were ever acknowledged by them—nor are the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, ever mentioned or alluded to in that connexion before the days

of Irenæus, who died in the year 202 of our present era, and whose writings cannot date earlier than 180. Lardner thinks 178 rather too early. It is no wonder, therefore, that an honest and learned man like Dodwell, Christian as he was, should express himself doubtingly.

In the controversy between Dr. Joseph Priestley and Bishop Horsley, (then archdeacon of St. Albans,) the former, in letter 4. p. 45, of his letters to the archdeacon of St. Albans, 1784, has the following passage: "I cannot help taking some farther notice of what you say with respect to this charge of a wilful falsehood on Origen. *Time was, you say, (page 160,) when the practice (of using unjustifiable means to serve a good end) was openly avowed, and Origen himself was among its defenders.* This, sir, as is usual with you, is much too strongly stated, and as you mention no authorities, you might think to escape detection. I believe, indeed, you went no farther than Mosheim for it. Jerom, in his Epist. to Pemmachius Oper. vol. 1, page 496, says, that Origen adopted the Platonic doctrine of the subserviency of truth to utility, as with respect to deceiving enemies, &c. as Mr. Hume, and other speculative moralists, have done, considering the foundation of all social virtue to be the public good. But, sir, it by no means follows, from this, that such persons will ever indulge themselves in any greater violations of truth than those who hold other speculative opinions concerning the foundation of morals. Jerom was far from saying as you do, *that he reduced his theory to practice.* He mentions no instance whatever of his having recourse to it, and is far, indeed, from vindicating you in asserting, page 160, *the art which he recommended he scrupled not to employ; and that to silence an adversary he had recourse to the wilful and deliberate allegation of a notorious falsehood."*

I regret that Priestley, who was an honest man as far as his religious prejudices would permit him, should be so biassed by them as to defend Origen and Jerom, as he does, in this abominable practice. What ! because custom well understood, permits me to say at the bottom of my letter to a correspondent, I am, sir, your most obedient servant, does this authorize me to lie, and deceive the public in the discussion of a public question ? No doubt, all morality is founded on public utility ; and therefore it is, that truth is the first of moral obligations. No truth is infringed by the common conclusion to a letter ; no truth that the public ought to insist on, is infringed, when a madman, with a drawn sword, is rendered harmless without injury to any one ; no truth is infringed when an enemy is deceived in war : why ? because, by public and universal consent, truth *au pied de lettre*, is not expected in these cases ; they are cases allowed as exceptions. But do these exceptions annihilate the general rule ? This is a passage which I regret to see from the pen of that good man, and which is to be ascribed to his Christian prejudices only.

Did Dr. Priestley know nothing of the practice of lying as a branch of *economy and dispensation* by Origen ? Did he ever read through that epistle to Pammachius which he cites ? If he did, he would have found in that very epistle justification enough for Dr. Horsley. Did Dr. Priestley never read the chapter in Eusebius, *how it may be lawful and fitting to use falsehood as a medicine, and for the benefit of those who want to be deceived* ? to which I have already referred the editor of the *Correspondent*, with page and edition, more than once ; and which may be found referred to in Gibbon's *Vindication* of his 15th and 16th chapters, page 130. Dr. Priestley ought to have known this before he cast such an imputation on Horsley, who, if he borrowed from Mosheim,

borrowed from an author whose accuracy and impartiality is as firmly established as that of any writer in the whole range of literature.

But the most astonishing thing of all is, that Dr. Priestley had himself made the same assertion respecting the ancient fathers, and respecting ORIGEN himself, as Bishop Horsley has made; and that, too, on the authority of Mosheim, in the year 1777, and again in 1782, as the following passage will testify. Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit, second edition, vol. 1, page 393, note. The first edition was in 1777; the second 1782. "Another vice (says Dr. Priestley) of most pernicious consequence, the Christians of the second and third centuries seem to have derived from the maxims of the philosophers,\* but because it does not relate to the subject of this work, except so far as it shows in general the hurtful connexion of Christianity and philosophy, (!) I shall insert it in a note. *It is the lawfulness of lying to promote a good cause.*

"Timæus Locris, the master of Pythagoras, says, that as we use poisons to cure men's bodies, if wholesome remedies will not do, so we restrain men's minds by falsehoods, if they will not be led with truth. Mosheim's Dissertations, page 195. Plato gave into the same vice, (page 156,) and in his book, De Republica, he says, the chiefs of a city may deceive the rest for their good, but that others ought to abstain from lying. (Page 199.) On this account, when Christianity prevailed, the Platonic philosophers endeavored, by feigned accounts of Pythagoras, and other early philosophers, to eclipse Christianity, setting up their characters and actions as if they had been superior

\* Have I not furnished you with superabundant proof that they might easier have derived it from the inculcations and practices of the Old and the New Testament? Is not St. Paul authority sufficient? [I cannot admit that he is, and think that he must have been misunderstood.]

to Christ. Hence the writings ascribed to Hermes and Zoroaster, and hence some think those of Sanconiatho to discredit those of Moses, p. 199.

“But the greatest misfortune was, that those Christians who embraced the Platonic principles in other respects, received this also, and thought it innocent and commendable to lie for the sake of truth; hence came so many forged gospels, and other writings of a similar nature, which did not appear till after the era of the incorporation of philosophy with Christianity; (ibid. page 200;) ORIGEN, *in particular*, avowed this principle, (page 203,) and also Chrysostom, (page 205.)”

When theological studies and doctrines can thus pervert the understanding of so able a man, and the disposition of so good a man as Priestley, it is nothing in their favor. That Priestley, the philosopher, should abuse the alliance between Christianity and philosophy—that he should sneer at Horsley for accusing Origen on the evidence adduced by Mosheim, after having himself abused Origen on the very same account, and on the very same evidence, is not a little strange. As to his charging the gnostic or platonizing Christians with the current forgeries of the day, there is nothing strange in that. Politicians are divided into two great classes, the ins and the outs; theologians are also divided into two similar classes, the orthodox and the heterodox. Orthodoxy, said Bishop Warburton to Lord Sandwich, in a debate on the corporation and test acts—orthodoxy, my lord, is my doxy; heterodoxy is another man’s doxy.

The platonizing orthodox Christians, the embryo Trinitarians of the second, who grew up during the third and fourth centuries, were Dr. Priestley’s heretics; they were gnostic, philosophic idolaters, to him. He, with his Ebionites, Nazarenes, and Alogi, were heretics and heterodox

to them. Priestley lays all the forgeries to the charge of the orthodox; *they* declare all the forgeries known were the forgeries of the heretics; the real truth is, they were the forgeries of the *Christians*; they began at the close of the first century, and have continued from that time to the Episcopal forgery in the Lambeth books, preserving the succession of bishops, the interpolation relating to the power of the church to decide on matters of faith, in the thirty-nine articles detected by Collins, the miracles at Holywell, and the prayers of Prince Hohenloe.

I shall close this general charge with the opinions of MOSHEIM on each of the principal fathers in succession. Mosheim is a writer to whom all sects and all parties in modern times appeal with perfect confidence in his learning and honesty. No more honorable testimony can be afforded of this, than that such inveterate opponents as Priestley and Horsley, should deem it sufficient to appeal to Mosheim without stating their original authorities.

MOSHEIM, in his treatise *De rebus Christianis ante Constantinum magnum*, [concerning the Christians before Constantine the Great,] at the close of his account of *Hermas*, at the end of the first century, observes in a note as follows:—(See Vidal's Translation, vol. 1, page 285, note *a*.)

“Several things, which I cannot well enter into in this place, conspire to impress me with the opinion, that *Hermas* could never have been so far the dupe of a heated imagination, as to fancy that he saw and heard things which in reality had no existence, but that he knowingly and wilfully was guilty of a cheat, and invented those divine conversations and visions which he asserts himself to have enjoyed, with a view to obtain a more ready reception for certain precepts and admonitions which he conceived would prove salutary to the Roman church. At



the time when he wrote, *it was an established maxim with many of the Christians, that it was pardonable in an advocate for religion to avail himself of fraud and deception, if it were likely they might conduce toward the attainment of any considerable good.* Of the host of silly books and stories to which this erroneous notion gave rise, from the second to the fifteenth century, no one acquainted with Christian history can be ignorant. The teachers of the Romish church themselves, appear to have considered Hermas as having written his work on this principle, and not to have altogether disapproved it. For, as we have seen above, they permitted his book to be circulated and perused with a view to private edification, but would not allow it to be read publicly in the assemblies of the church. (This observation relates to the governors of the Romish church in the second century : see note n.) From their refusal of the latter, it may fairly be inferred, that they did not regard the visions of Hermas, or the precepts and advice of the angel, with whom he pretended to have conversed, in the light of divine communications ; but their acquiescing in the *former*, very plainly shows, that the kind of fiction to which this author had recourse, appeared to them such as was unwarrantable ; and that they did not think it unjustifiable to practise imposition on the multitude in the way of instruction ; or to invent pious stories for the sake of commanding their attention. Had they believed Hermas to have written under the influence of divine communication, they would not have dared to deny his work a place among the sacred writings, and pronounce it unfit to be read in public. On the other hand, had they felt indignant at the cheat practised by him, or disapproved of the guile to which he had recourse, unquestionably they would never have recommended the perusal of his work to Christians in private,

as useful to confirm their piety." I wonder Archbishop Wake never thought of this. How well does all this reasoning of Mosheim apply to his translation of the apostolic fathers! Mosheim, speaking of the forged writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, says, "many other deceptions of this sort, to which custom has most improperly given the name of pious frauds, are known to have been practised in the second and third centuries; the authors of them were probably actuated by no ill intention, but nothing can be said in their favor, for their conduct in this respect was certainly unwarrantable and unwise. Although the greater part of those who were concerned in these forgeries on the public, belonged, no doubt, to some heretical sect or other, and particularly to that class that denominated itself *Gnostic*, I cannot take upon me to acquit even the most strictly orthodox of all participation in this species of criminality. *For it appears from evidence beyond all exception, that a pernicious maxim current in the schools of the Egyptians, Platonists, Pythagoreans and Jews, became early recognised by the Christians, and soon found among them numerous patrons, namely, that they who made it their business to deceive with a view of promoting the cause of truth, were deserving rather of commendation than censure. See what I have collected with regard to this in my dissertation. De turbata per recentiores platonicos Ecclesia.*"

In vol. 1, page 135, of Vidal's translation, Mosheim says, "according to ancient report, quoted by Eusebius from Apollinaris, a writer in the second century, our Saviour ordered his disciples to stay at Jerusalem for twelve years after his parting from them. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. 5, ch. 18. Clem. Alex. expredicatione peti Strom. lib. 6, chapter 5, page 762." Considering the great antiquity of this account, (Mosheim should have added *if* Eusebius

can be relied on,) "it may not be altogether undeserving of credit; but, at the same time, we cannot help regarding it with some suspicion, since it is certain, that even in the earliest ages of Christianity, it was no uncommon thing for men to fill up the chasms of genuine history with fictitious conceits, the mere suggestions of their own imaginations."

Dr. CHAPMAN, in his *Miscellaneous Tracts*, pages 191, 207, says, "the learned Mosheim, also a foreign divine, and zealous advocate for Christianity, who, by his writings, has deserved the esteem of all good and learned men, intimates his fears that those who search with any degree of attention into the writings and most holy doctors of the fourth century, will find them all, without exception, disposed to *deceive and lie* whenever the interest of religion requires it." See also Middleton's *Free Enquiry*, 161.

If these things be so, what reliance can be placed on the Christian authors of the three first centuries after Christ? There is absolutely no evidence whatever for the books of the New Testament called the gospels, but these very men. That these books existed substantially, is known only as a possible or probable conclusion from scattered passages in the writings of these fathers of the church, which are so similar in many instances to passages in our modern New Testament, that Christians have concluded they belonged to that book. But as books now acknowledged by all to be forgeries, are quoted by these ancient fathers as genuine, there is no knowing from what or whose writings the quotations in question are taken; especially as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are cited by name by no author whatever anterior to Irenæus, who wrote about 180, and died 202 of our era.

It is of great importance, however, to go through with

these fathers, one by one, and to ascertain the character of each of them. The question of Christianity rests absolutely on this enquiry; for if the only men who have borne testimony to the authenticity of these gospels are men who are in no case worthy of credit—some being deficient in common sense, mere drivellers—almost all of them in common honesty as writers—if none of them have taken, and few of them were capable of taking, due pains to ascertain whether the writings called the gospels were genuine or not—if it be known to a certainty, even at this day, that these writings underwent additions, interpolations, curtailments, and forgeries of all kinds, to serve the peculiar views, and promote the peculiar doctrines of the very men on whom alone the evidence of their authenticity depends—what reasonable man can put faith in these gospels, or acknowledge them as honest guides for his belief, either as to matter of fact, or matter of doctrine?

I hope, therefore, that those, who really desire to get to the bottom of this question, will bear with me while I go through the *catalogue raisonnee* of the men who are called the ancient fathers of the Christian church; those burning and shining lights, so necessary to illuminate the cloudy understandings of the many sected followers of Christ; of whose existence, sayings, and doings, we know nothing but from these Christian fathers.

[But if such be the general character of *the ancient fathers of the Christian church*, what confidence can be placed in them? and if the gospels were exclusively in their hands for several centuries, what can we now know about them? But we shall examine the fathers separately, and see if an individual among them can be found through whom the gospels might have passed without alteration, or whether any of them are any thing bet-

ter than made up stories, all based on one and the same tradition, but, in detail, chiefly made up for the occasion ; and much that is contained in each of them, is not found in the others, nor in any other account.]

## LECTURE V.

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### ACCOUNT OF THE ANCIENT FATHERS CONTINUED.

“ Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thes. v. 21.

[I shall still follow my learned friend, Philo Veritas, interlarding here and there a sentence, or a paragraph, always apprising the audience, when I thus speak, that the hearer may be able to distinguish the statements of *Veritas* from commentaries of my own.\*]

The authors of the two first centuries who have been dignified as fathers of the church, and whose writings, or notices of them, are supposed to have reached us, are Barnabas, who is *said* to have written about A. D. 71. Clemens Romanus, 96. The shepherd of Hermas, 100. St. Ignatius, 107. Polycarp, 108. Papias, known only by some extracts in Eusebius, 116. Justin Martyr, 140. Tatian, 172. Hegisippus, 173. Melito, 177. The epistles to Vienne and Lyons, 177. Irenæus, 178 or 180. Athenagoras, 178. Theophilus of Antioch, 181. Pantænus, 192. All these dates are conjectural; settled upon what christian writers deem probabilities, with no certain evidence to guide us to the most part of them.

Justin Martyr died 163. Irenæus, 202. Clemens Alexandrinus, 220. Origen, 259. Cyprian, 258. Lactantius

\* [The reader will also distinguish my own commentaries from those of *Veritas*, by being inclosed in brackets.]

wrote about 311. Eusebius Pamphilus died 340. Athanasius died 371. Cyrill, 386. Basil, 378. Gregory of Nyssa, 395. Ambrose, 397. Chrysostom, 407. Jerom 420. Augustin, 430. Beyond these it is not worth while to enumerate. By this time, the orthodox faith, not much different from what is so called in modern days, was fully established, under the sanction of imperial authority.

For the accounts I give of the writers of the two first centuries, I refer generally to Vidal's translation of *Mosheim de rebus Christianis*, ante Const. Mag.—to the two first volumes of Dr. Jortin's *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*—to the *Eccles. Hist.* of Lewis Ellis Dupin, and to the "Free Enquiry" of Dr. Conyers Middleton, whose accuracy of references has never been attacked by the most inveterate of his opponents. These are books not difficult to be procured; they are books composed by christian writers of established character. The treatise of Barbeyrac, (the French translator of Grotius *de jure belli et pacis*), *sur la morale des peres de l'ancien Eglise*, I presume no learned man, no lawyer at least, will hesitate to admit.

**BARNABAS.** There is an epistle, says Dr. Jortin, (vol. 1, page 217,) ascribed to Barnabas; we cannot certainly tell by whom it was written. If it really were written by St. Paul's companion, there are internal characters in it, that incline us to judge that he was not at that time under any particular guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jortin, *ib.* page 218, 219.\*

**CLEMENS ROMANUS.** Two epistles in Greek are ascribed to this writer, of which the first may be considered genuine in the main, but greatly interpolated; the latter

\* [It is now pretty well ascertained, that the epistle of Barnabas was written as late as A. D. 130 or 131. See *Ancient History of Universalism*, page 34.]

very questionable. Other forged writings attributed to him, are eight books of the apostolic constitutions ; a set of apostolic canons ; the recognitions of St. Clement ; the homilies of St. Clement : Mosheim de Reb. Chr. vol. 1, page 270 of Vidal. Clemens urges the story of the phoenix as a true story, and a type and proof of the resurrection from the dead. Who Clement was, is by no means settled. Wake's Ap. Fath. Prelim. Disc. § 7.

**THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS.** Is a production dating about the middle of the second century, falsely ascribed to Hermas, brother to Pius, said to have been bishop of Rome about the close of the first century ; but this is all uncertain. " The shepherd of Hermas, so called, (says Mosheim,) ib. 284, contains such an admixture of folly and superstition with piety, such a ridiculous association of egregious nonsense with things momentous and useful, that to me (Mosheim) it appears clearly to be the work of some disordered fanatic ; or of some man, who, from a pious motive, conceived himself authorized in pretending to have derived his maxims and precepts from conversations with God and the angels." How Archbishop Wake could gravely publish the apostolical fathers for the edification of pious christians, no one but an orthodox churchman can explain.

**IGNATIUS.** (Vidal's Mosheim, vol. 1, page 274.) " There are extant several epistles with the name of Ignatius prefixed to them, but their authenticity has been much disputed. The prevailing opinion, however, is in favor of six of them." Mosheim says, six or seven of them have in them *something of a genuine cast*, (page 276, note k,) but, under the present circumstances, let us endeavor what we may, we shall never exonerate these letters from suspicion of corruption and interpolation ; the question of their genuineness remains undecided. (Page 277.)



Vol. 2, page 51. The acts of Martyrdom of St. Ignatius are interpolated. But the dreams and visions of his friends, and, indeed, the whole story, is incredible. Archbishop Wake has inserted it in his apostolical fathers, and a good companion it is to the Pastor of Hermas. Any man of common sense, who has not a cause to serve, will agree with Mosheim that the whole story is incredible.

POLYCARP. Vidal's Mosheim, vol. 1, page 278. Of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, we have an epistle to the Philippians, considered by some as spurious, by others as genuine. Mosheim considers it as corrupted, interpolated, and containing passages trifling, absurd, and contradictory. (Ib. note l.) The lying wonders detailed of his martyrdom may be found in 1 Jortin Rem. on Ecc. Hist. 333. It requires a very full share of orthodox faith to credit them. How Archbishop Wake could reconcile it to his conscience to leave out the miracle of the dove, I cannot tell; more especially as he declares Bishop Usher's MS., which contains it, to be too well attested to be doubted. I do not know much difference between the pious frauds of purposed omission lest the truth should be suspected, and purposed interpolation to gain credit to a pious story. See Dr. Middleton's Free Enquiry, page 154, &c.

PAPIAS. *Supposed* to be a disciple of John, and Bishop of Hierapolis: he is little known, except from what Eusebius has collected concerning him. I object generally to the testimonies of Eusebius, as a professed forger, fabricator, interpolator, and deceiver. Credat Judæus Apella, non ego: let the orthodox christian give credit to this historian, I give none; unless where the facts are credible in themselves, and can serve no pious fraud; if they can, the ready lie is at the end of his pen. Dr. Whitby, whose learning and fairness stands deservedly high, joins Irenæus with Papias, (Præfat. ad strictur. Patr. page 73.)

"It is very remarkable, (says Whitby,) that these two earliest writers of the second century, who, on the credit of idle reports, and uncertain fame, have delivered to us things said to be done by the apostles and their scholars, and have shamefully imposed upon us by the forgery of fables and false stories." Eusebius, to my surprise, speaks of Papias much in the language of Dr. Whitby, as to his fables and forgeries, and calls him "a weak and silly man." Euseb. Hist. Ecc. lib. 3, ch. 39.

The SYBILLINE VERSES are considered as a forgery of Papias.

Here ends the list of what are called the APOSTOLICAL FATHERS. Archbishop Wake's translation of what he is pleased to call their genuine epistles, with the accounts of the martyrdom of Ignatius and Polycarp, (equally veracious,) has undergone five or six editions, greatly to the edification of all pious and orthodox old women, and not much to the honor of the pious and right reverend translator.

The christian gospels, if they can be authenticated, must be authenticated by the references to them, and by the acknowledgment of them, and appeals to them, of writers near to their times, and when the publication of these gospels would naturally create much conversation, much citation, and much public interest in all christian churches, and among all pious christians. The poor, tasteless drivellers whom I have noticed, and whom Wake has translated, are the only christian writers near to the apostolic times; that is, about 60—100 years after the apostles. But even the writings of these apostolic fathers are all suspected, in whole or in part, by christian literati of high repute; they are undoubtedly mutilated and interpolated; as such we have them: even Wake has condescended to mutilation by omission. But be they genuine or not, *not one*

*of them authenticates, or even mentions any of our existing gospels, in substance or by name.*

[What have we here? All the christian fathers of the first century ; and one enumerated above, to wit, Barnabas, I think, with Dr. Priestley and others, was evidently of the second century, and “ not one of them authenticates, or even mentions any of our existing gospels, in substance or by name !” If it had been known that any of the disciples of Jesus had written an account of his life, miracles, doctrine, death, and resurrection, would no one, for forty years and upwards, (from 63 to 116 of the christian era,) have made mention of these books, and of their authors, in such a manner as to have put the matter beyond all dispute? But nothing of the kind. “ We must, therefore, go farther, and to still more suspicious times.”]

The next christian writer in order of time is JUSTIN MARTYR. Of the works ascribed to him in this age of forgery, none are considered as genuine but his dialogue with Trypho, and his apologies. 1 Jortin. Rem. Ecc. Hist. 205.

He affirms, that prophetic gifts, and extraordinary powers, subsisted in the church in his time ; that the gift of expounding the scriptures was conferred on himself by the special grace of God. He says the affairs of this world could not be carried on but by means of the form of the cross. The sea could not be passed, or the earth tilled without it. That the form of a man is that of the cross by the erection of his body, the extension of his arms, and the projection of his nose. Then he goes on to apply all the sticks and pieces of wood mentioned in the Old Testament, to the cross of Christ. Of such silly fancies are his works greatly composed, yet does he insist upon their having been divinely suggested to him, and appeals to the Jews whether he could have acquired otherwise such a

perfect knowledge of the scripture? Yet he was perfectly ignorant of Hebrew. He declares that all good christians believe in the millenium, wherein they are to enjoy all sensual pleasures for a thousand years previous to the general resurrection. A doctrine which he deduces from the prophets, and from John the apostle, and in which he is followed by all the fathers of the second and third centuries. He asserts that God made the world, gave the care of it to angels, who fell in love with women, and corrupted boys, and spread terror among men. He professes great regard for the Sybilline books, (now known to be spurious,) and Hytaspes, and appeals to them as divinely inspired writings, and says, that by the contrivance of demons it was made a capital crime to read them. These forgeries received currency from the authority of Justin, and others of the early fathers. He asserts the divine inspiration of the Septuagint version. He confounded and mistook the Sabine deity Semo Sanchus with Simon Magus. He is charged by Crowe (Croius) with having forged a passage in Esdras, and accused by Thirlby of the utmost negligence and rashness. He alleges *necromancy* as a proof of the immortality of the soul. He declares the demons succeeded in exorcising in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These, and other absurdities, are abundantly proved by extracts and references in Middleton's *Free Enquiry*, (vide index,) and in Barbeyrac, *sur la Morale des Peres*, chapter 2. Is such a man authority for any thing? But neither are the gospels cited by Justin Martyr.

[Worse and worse. What! was Justin Martyr ignorant of the gospels? He certainly would have quoted them instead of the Sybilline books, or, at least, as well as the Sybilline books, if he had known any thing about them. But no—he makes no mention of them.]

IRENÆUS, a worthy disciple of that acknowledged idiot Papias, 1 Jortin Rem. Ecc. Hist. page 310, a still more diligent collector of apostolic traditions.

On that authority, in direct contradiction to gospel fact, and acknowledged dates, he asserts that our Saviour was at least fifty years old when he was crucified; that all the old men who lived in apostolic times coincided in this opinion; that St. John related it to them. Yet St. John's gospel, which he could never have seen, makes Jesus but thirty-one years old at the crucifixion. Whitby and Cave do well to exclaim at this flagrant mistake, if you choose so to call it.

IRENÆUS wrote five books against heresies, and some fragments to be found quoted by Eusebius and others. Except these fragments, we have nothing but an old Latin version of Irenæus. His death is generally placed in 202; the time of his writings is variously placed from 178 to 192; the mean between the two calculations will probably be right. See 2 Lard. Credib. 154, 155.

Irenæus mentions the evangelists by name as the authors of the gospels usually ascribed to them. He is the first writer, christian or pagan, who does so. The first clear and distinct notice of the existence of these gospels, supposed to have been written by the apostles themselves, is 185 years after Christ. About this time there existed a multitude of other gospels of nearly similar import with those we now possess; varying in the facts related, and the conversations and sayings detailed, but whose evidence of authenticity had never been examined. Many christians, far superior in understanding, talents, and learning to Irenæus, rejected those he has adopted, and received others: but upon what grounds some were received and others rejected, it is impossible now to ascertain; nor was any attempt made to settle this important

question, and to ascertain the true from the false, at any time that I know of, previous to the decision at the council of Nice. For, although Melito, Origen, Jerom, had formed their own selections, the grounds of choice, the historical and intrinsic motives of adoption or rejection, are nowhere detailed in such a manner that we can now judge of their relevancy. Irenæus seems to have adopted the general, popular, and prevailing opinion, without much scrutiny on the subject. We suppose so, because he was too ignorant and silly to exercise any judicious discrimination on the subject. For instance,

He relates that the millennium would certainly occur; and this from the accounts of old men who had heard St. John give an account of it from our Saviour's relation. During this millennium vineyards shall have 10,000 vines, each vine 10,000 branches, each branch 10,000 shoots, each shoot 10,000 bunches, each bunch 10,000 grapes, and each branch shall yield 25 measures of wine. So of wheat, each grain shall produce 10,000 stalks, each stalk 10,000 grains, each grain 10,000 lb. of the finest flour; and so of all fruits, seeds, &c. in proportion. For all this he cites Papias, a disciple of St. John, and companion to Polycarp; and he confirms it by the testimonies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the revelations of St. John.\* Irenæus affirms also that Enoch and Elias were translated into the same paradise that Adam was expelled from. He defends the divine authority of the Septuagint. He says (wherein he is followed by all the principal fathers of the

\* Chillingsworth, speaking of Papias, observes, that if Papias, who first committed to writing the doctrines of the millennium, of angels, demons, &c. could either by his own error, or by a desire to deceive others, cozen the fathers of his day in these, why not in other things? Why not in twenty as well as in one? And why might not twenty others do it as well as he? See Chillingsworth's additional discourse, page 36, 37, at the end of the seventh edition of his works.

succeeding centuries) that the sacred scriptures were utterly destroyed at the Babylonish captivity, but restored again by Esdras after 70 years. Indeed, Esdras (2 Esd. chapter 40) says the same thing. I see nothing impossible in this, though all modern divines are greatly scandalized at it. He intimates more than once the intermixture of the angels of God with the daughters of men, an opinion that maintained its ground through the four first centuries. (Whitby, *Strict. Patr. Gen.* in chapter vi, verse 4, page 5.) For these and many more at least equal absurdities, see Middleton's *Free Enquiry*, and Barbeyrac *sur la morale des peres*, page 19, et seq. Books that no honest and impartial reader can peruse, without full conviction that my representations do not exceed the reality; and that men so childish and silly were incapable of any just and critical discrimination; and their suffrages therefore are utterly worthless.

I have strong doubts about the testimony of Irenæus. For, 1st, except some Greek fragments preserved by Eusebius, in which Irenæus cites, or is made to cite the evangelists by name, we have little else but a Latin translation of his works, of whose date we know nothing. Of Eusebius we may say, in the language of modern exclamation, "Ferdinand Moses Mendez de Pinto, was but a type of thee, thou liar of the first magnitude!" 2. By the contemporary writers, enumerated by Lardner in vol. 2 of his *Credib.* Athenagoras, 178. Miltiader, 130. Theophilus, 181. (except one passage relating to the Logos) Hantænus, 192. Polycrates, 196. Heraclitus, 196. Hermias, 200. Serapion, 200, contain, indeed a few citations similar to passages contained also in the Evangelists, but no distinct and positive reference to them, nor any quotation of them by name.

[Here are no less than eight different writers, all con-

temporary with Irenæus, and not one of them quotes the gospels by name. Of course they do not give the four selected by Irenæus such a decided preference as he does. Neither is it known why these were preferred to others.]

ATHENAGORAS, in his apology, says we do not deny but in different places, cities, and counties, extraordinary works are performed in the names of idols, from which some have received benefit, others injury. *Apol.* page 25. Origen admits to the same purpose, *Contr. Cels.* lib. 3, page 124. Athenagoras says of the prophets, that while under divine impulse, they are in ecstasy, and delivered their inspiration as a pipe or flute delivers a sound as communicated to it. *Legat. pro. Christ.* page 9 edit ad. calcem. Justin Martyr *Op.* In this opinion he is followed by Justin Martyr and Tertullian. *Mid. Free Enquir.* 111. He was of opinion, like most of the fathers, that the affairs of this world were committed to the government of angels. He regarded second marriages as adulterous; a very common opinion among the ancient fathers.\*

CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS.—This father, so far from agreeing with Irenæus as to the age of Jesus Christ, affirms, as the latter fathers generally do, that he preached but one year, and died, (*Stromat.* 1, page 407, edit. Oxon. Tertullian *adv. Jud.* page 215. *Midd. Free Enq.* 56) whereas, from our present gospels it is evident that his ministry continued through several successive passovers; and according to Sir Isaac Newton's computation, (*Obs. on Dan.* chapter 11, page 159) he died in his 34th year. Yet Clement testifies of himself that he had received his doctrines from several disciples of the chief apostles, who had truly preserved the tradition of the blessed doctrine,

\* See Darbeyr. *ub. sup.* chapter 4, who enumerates and produces proofs from Chrysostom, Theophilus of Antioch, Clemens Alexand. Tertullian Minucius, Felix, Origen, St. Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, and Jerom.



as it came directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, and John. But he deals largely in the books prevalent at the time, and now known to be apocryphal and forged. Like Irenæus, Tertullian, Cyprian, and many more, he is fully persuaded of the power of magical incantations, and the power of magicians over demons. Indeed, in those days, what the heathens were supposed to perform by magic, the christians were supposed to perform by means of gifts divinely bestowed on them. Among the gifts thus supernaturally imparted and exercised in Justin Martyr's time, he reckons healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, &c. 1 Jortin's Rem. 307. Clement is also persuaded that the worship of the celestial bodies was ordained by God, as a gradual means of leading the heathen to the knowledge of the true God. For the references in truth of all this, and for a copious analysis of the three books of this pedagogue, I must send the reader to Barbeyrac's chapter on this father, in his treatise so often cited, *sur la morale des Peres*; and which will supply abundant proofs of the ignorance and imbecility with which Clement treats ethical questions.

TERTULLIAN, says Dr. Jortin, had no small share of credulity. He proves that the soul is corporeal though immortal, from the visions of an illuminated sister who had seen a soul. *De anima*, page 311. He affirms roundly (*constat, says he, ethnibus quoque testibus*) that a fire city was seen for forty days suspended over Jerusalem; this he considers as a proof that the millennium is at hand; *Cont. Marc*, iii, page 24. St. John is supposed to have been banished by Domitian, A. D. 94. Not a likely story at that age. Tertullian (and others after him, on his credit) says that John was put into a vessel of boiling oil! This story St. Jerom also repeats with embellishments of his own. St. John must probably at this time

have been near 130 years old, for Jesus Christ would have been 128 at that time. See Leclerc's Hist. Eccles. page 508. The apostle came out unhurt, says Tertullian! He came out stronger and healthier than he went in, says St. Jerom! Jortin observes that Jerom might have in his thoughts, Eson coming out of Medea's kettle, from 7 Ovid. Metam. 288. To believe all Tertullian's falsehoods, it is necessary to adopt his maxim, *Credo quia impossibile est*, and that the true disciples of Christ have no business with curiosity or enquiry, their duty being to believe. *Cum credimas, nihil desideramus ultra credere*. De præscr. hæc. § 8.\*

I omit, on account of their number and their length, all the falsehoods and the follies of this pious father, which Middleton and Barbeyrac have collected. If he could have been defended or excused, Jortin, who was very orthodox, very ingenious, very learned, and full of good taste, would have defended or excused him. To Middleton and Barbeyrac I refer the reader.

ORIGEN. He denounces second marriages as excluding the parties from the kingdom of God; but as the example of Abraham stood in his way, he says that all the history of that patriarch is to be understood not literally but allegorically.

He declares, (see Middleton, index sub voce Origen, as a general reference,) that the Christians of his days could drive away devils, perform cures, and foresee things to come. That the driving away of devils was generally

\* Tertullian, who lived about A. D. 200, says, "Why am I not ashamed of maintaining that the Son of God was born? Why! but because it is itself a shameful thing. I maintain that the Son of God died; well, *that* is wholly credible, because it is monstrously absurd. I maintain that, after having been buried, he arose again: and *that* I take to be absolutely true, because it was manifestly impossible!" De Spectaculis, c. 30. Diegesia, p. 326.

performed by laymen. He allows that there was a demon called Esculapius, very skilful in medicine.\* He says, that the Jews cast out devils by the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; these devils were accustomed to destroy cattle.† He cites as genuine, the spurious book, entitled, “the Preaching of Peter.” He denies the charge of Celsus, that the christians interpolated the verses of the Sybil; a denial that involves, on his side, beyond all doubt, a wilful falsehood; see 1 Jortin 182 and 188—217. Justin Martyr also cites the Sybilline verses as genuine in his *Cohortatio ad Græcos*. Jortin suspects this tract to be spurious, and it would be well for Justin Martyr’s character if it were proved so.

CYPRIAN, or St. Cyprian, as he is generally called, an

\* Mr. Addison’s versification of the prophecies which foretold the life and actions of Æsculapius, from the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, may compare very well with Pope’s *Messiah*.

Once, as the sacred infant she surveyed,  
The god was kindled in the raving maid;  
And thus she uttered her prophetic tale,  
“Hail, great Physician of the world! all hail,  
Hail, mighty infant, who in years to come,  
Shall heal the nations, and defraud the tomb!  
Swift be thy growth, thy triumphs unconfined,  
Make kingdoms thicker, and increase mankind.  
Thy daring art shall animate the dead,  
And draw the thunder on thy guilty head;  
Then shalt thou die, but from the dark abode  
Shalt rise victorious, and be twice a god.”

Taylor’s *Diegesis*, p. 148.

† “Origen, in his answer to Celsus, ch. 6. says, “Then Celsus says, that all the power which the christians had, was owing to the names of certain demons, and their invocation of them. But this is a most notorious calumny. For the power which the christians had was not in the least owing to enchantments, but to their pronouncing the name J E S U S, and making mention of some remarkable occurrences of his life. Nay, the name of J E S U S has such power over demons, that sometimes it has proved effectual, though pronounced by very wicked persons.” Taylor’s *Diegesis*, p. 335.

African bishop, full of high notions of clerical dominion ; remarkable for a style even more inflated than that of Tertullian, whom he imitates. This godly man put away his wife on turning christian, that he might not be contaminated with the sensual enjoyments of this world. For a man in full health and vigor to do this, (says his biographer Pontius,) and to live a life of continence, is truly a signal miracle !\* Cyprian had a curious method of carrying on his business and his church government. Did he use wine a little too freely at the Eucharist ? He was favored with a vision ordering him to mix water with it. Had he to threaten some priest for being too lenient ? He has a vision in which he is told how to punish them. Does he wish to reclaim one priest, or appoint another ? He has divine communications expressly to the purpose.

I fancy the reader (if his good sense be not overwhelmed by orthodoxy) will agree with me, that this lying saint was an egregious sinner, however fashionable his conduct might be among the pious and venerable fathers of the christian church. His visions usually took place when he had any point of episcopal authority to carry with the previous consent of his clergy and people : it is useless to debate, says he : we have no need of human suffrage, when we are preceded by divine admonitions. Ep. 33. In a time of persecution Cyprian fled, and pleaded an express revelation for so doing. Yet he exhorts strenuously to martyrdom ; although he complains that many who had been persecuted for religion's sake, had, by their conduct, disgraced their profession. I have not room for many of his wonderful stories, (inventions,) from his magnificent treatise on the lapsed Christians. I refer to Middleton's

\* [I should suppose it would depend, in some measure, how well he liked his wife.]

Free Enquiry, 112 et seq. to 2 Jortin's Rem. on Ecc. Hist. 76, 77, where the reader will find abundance to disgust him with the conduct, pretensions, declarations, and professions of this dexterous seer of visions, and dreamer of dreams. For his fraudulent application of scripture passages, and his fraudulent interpolations, I refer to Barbeyrac.

LACTANTIUS asserts, that the christians of his day could exorcise possessed persons, and drive away demons. He maintained the genuineness of the Sybilline oracles. He urges necromancy as a proof of the immortality of the soul. He argues against the right of self-defence, and the resistance of injuries; against the use of arms. Against the right to accuse any one of a capital crime. He exclaims also against foreign commerce; against taking interest for money. See Barbeyrac and Middleton.

ATHANASIUS was one of the first who introduced monks into Italy. He wrote a life of the monk St. Anthony, and says, in the preface, that he had inserted nothing therein that he did not know to be true, having seen the saint himself, or having heard it from one who had long ministered to him, and poured water on his hands. For the character of this book of lies, I refer to Middleton's Free Enq. 147, and to 2 Jortin's Rem. 85, who have given specimens of the figments of this impudent predecessor of Baron Munchausen.

GREGORY of Nyssa published a life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, or the wonder worker, after the model of Athanasius's life of St. Anthony.\*

\* St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, A. D. 243, "being yet a layman, he wrought many miracles, he cured the sick, chased away devils by his epistles, and converted the Gentiles and Ethnics unto the faith, not only with words, but by deeds of far greater force." Socrates Scholast. lib. 4. c. 22. Diegesis, p. 343.

But I am weary of a continual reference to the works that expose this mass of folly and fraud ; where sometimes the one predominates, sometimes the other ; and which I regret to say characterizes so peculiarly the christian authors of the times nearest to the purest period of the christian church, if, indeed, such a period can really be found. I shall, therefore, now confine myself to Eusebius, Jerom, and St. Austin, or Augustine ; and when I have done with these, the reader will have before him some faithful characteristic traits by which he may judge of the characters of the writings and the writers, whose evidence alone is the basis on which the authenticity of our New Testament rests.

EUSEBIUS is the principal author for ecclesiastical history, one of the most zealous of the christian fathers, and the writer on whom christian divines generally rely. Jones and Lardner do not seem to entertain a doubt of any thing that Eusebius asserts. Indeed, with all his learning, his indefatigable industry, his honest zeal, and his good intentions, I know not a more credulous critic than Lardner. His christian prejudices blind him in every page, and *it seems, it is likely, it is probable, we may conclude, no doubt, it is reasonable to suppose,* and similar expressions, stand incessantly in the place of fact and argument, when these are not at hand.

To Eusebius we are obliged for the first regular defence and recommendation of *saint worship*. 2 Jortin Rem. 157—160. To Eusebius we are indebted for the interpolated passage in Josephus ; for the forged correspondence between Jesus Christ and Abgarus of Edessa ; for the christian legion of Apollinaris ; and, as I suspect, for many other forgeries. I will not dwell on the many wonderful and miraculous stories he relates, (see Middl. Free

Enq. 127, et seq.) but come to the point at once—he was a forger on principle, and by profession.

He acknowledges that he purposely concealed the dissensions and wickedness of the christians and martyrs: nay, he goes so far (Præp. Evang. lib. 1, page 11,) as to assert, that since the coming of Christ there have been no wars, or tyrants, or cannibals, or sodomites, or persons committing incest, or savages destroying their parents, &c. The title of chapter 2 of book 12, of his evangelical preparation, is, “how it may be *proper to use FALSEHOOD as a medicine, and for the benefit of those who require to be deceived.*” He defends this by the example of Plato, and the writers of the Old Testament. See Gibbon’s Misc. Works, p. 618. I make no remark on this for the present; but I proceed to his worthy imitator, St. Hieronymus—Jerom.\*

\* Eusebius lived in the days of Constantine, to whom christianity owes its legal establishment. It may be well, therefore, to know something of the character of this emperor. “There is abundant proof that he drowned his unoffending wife, FAUSTA, in a bath of boiling water; beheaded his eldest son, Crispus, in the very year in which he presided in the Council of Nice, murdered the two husbands of his sisters Constantia, and Anastasia; murdered his own father-in-law, Maximian Herculius; murdered his own nephew, being his sister Constantia’s son, a boy only 12 years old, and murdered a few others! which actions, Dr. Lardner, with truly christian moderation, tells us, ‘*seem to cast a reflection upon him.*’ Among the few others, never be it forgotten, was Sopater, the pagan priest, who fell a victim and a martyr to the sincerity of his attachment to paganism, and to the honesty of his refusing the consolations of heathenism to the conscience of the royal murderer.” Diegesis, p. 348.

“*Constantine, the puissant, the mighty and noble emperor, unto the bishops, pastors, and people wheresoever.*

“Moreover, we thought good ~~that~~ if there can be found extant any work or book compiled by Arius, the ~~same~~ should be burned to ashes, so that not only his damnable doctrine may thereby be wholly rooted out; but also that no relic thereof may remain to posterity. This also, &c. for so doing, *shall die the death.* For as soon as he is taken, our pleasure is, that his

JEROM was a zealous admirer and promoter of the monkish life, and for the sake of advancing its credit in the world, he wrote the lives of two celebrated monks, St. Paul and St. Hilarion; in which, after having invoked the same holy spirit which inspired these monks, to inspire him also with language equal to the wondrous acts he was about to relate, he has inserted a number of tales and miracles so grossly fabulous as not to admit *the least doubt* of their being absolute forgeries. The life of Paul was published first; and, as we learn from Jerom himself, (in the preface to the life of Hilarion,) was treated as a mere fable by the free-thinkers, or Scyllæan dogs, as he calls them, of those days.

Nor is it considered at this day in any other character, or mentioned by the learned for any other reason, than as a proof of that passion for fiction and imposture, which (as Dodwell says in his dissertation on Irenæus) possessed and actuated the fathers of the fourth century. See Midd. Free Enq. postscript cxxx. Dodwell is far from being alone in that remark, as I have already shown. Mosheim, in his Ecc. Hist. Cent. iv. part 2, chapter 3, states, it is a maxim adopted among the fathers of the church, that *it is an act of virtue to deceive and lie for the interests of the church*. Bishop Heliodorus, in his romance of Theagenes and Chariclea Æthiop. lib. 1, insinuates the same maxim. "*For a falsehood is a good thing when it aids the speaker and does no injury to the hearer.*"

head be stricken off from his shoulders. God keep you in tuition." Socrates Scholasticus, vol. 1. c. 6. fol. p. 227. Diegesis, p. 350.

"Having, by God's assistance, gotten the victory over mine enemies, I entreat you therefore, beloved ministers of God, and servants of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *to cut off the heads of this hydra of heresy, for so shall you please both God and me.*" Euseb. Vita. Const. lib. 3. c. 12. lb. p. 351.



Let us, however, proceed to Jerom's deliberate defence of this practice. "In like manner, O most learned men, we have learned in the schools those maxims of Aristotle deduced from the precepts of Gorgias, that there are several methods of discussion ; and, among others, one mode of writing is *gymnastically*, another *dogmatically*. In the first, the disputation is vague ; and, in replying to your adversary, you sometimes say one thing, sometimes another. You use arguments without restraint, you say one thing, and you think another ; you show him bread, and you conceal a stone. In the other kind of disputation you must bear an open front and be ingenuous." After alleging to this purpose the examples of the Greek and Roman orators and philosophers, St. Jerom goes on to the apologists of christianity. "Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinaris, have written much against Celsus and Porphyry. Consider the nature of the arguments they use, and what slippery problems they employ to overturn the inventions of the devil. How they are compelled, in replying to the pagans, to urge, not what they believe themselves, but what is necessary to their cause. I do not here instance the Latin fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, Minucius, Victorinus, Lactantius, Hilarius, lest I should be suspected rather of blaming their practices, than defending my own. But I will produce the example of the apostle Paul, whom I never peruse without thinking that I hear his thunderings rather than read his words. Consult his epistles, particularly to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, where he disputes continually. You will see, in the proofs he borrows from the Old Testament, with what address, what *dissimulation* he manages his subject. He deals in words that seem so simple, that you would rather say that it was some ignorant countryman who used them, some innocent person equally unskilled

to lay a snare or to avoid one ; but on whatever side you turn your eyes, you see nothing but thunderbolts. He seems embarrassed how to defend his cause ; he seizes every thing that falls in his way. He turns his back that he may conquer ; he makes semblance of flight to worry his antagonist. Let us charge this upon him as a crime, and say to him, *the testimonies you have used against the Jews and other heretics, have one signification in their original place, and another in your writings. We see here examples forcibly pressed into the service, which aid you in gaining a victory, but have no force in the books from whence you take them.* Would not the apostle address us like our Saviour ? We speak one thing abroad, another at home. The crowd hear our parables ; the disciples our truth. Our Saviour proposes questions to the Pharisees, but he resolves none. It is one thing to teach a disciple, another to confute an adversary."

Such is the reasoning of Jerom.\* We find, that in using these artifices, he only followed the practices of the fathers who preceded him. In another passage of the same apology, he says, " it is a pretty thing, indeed, to advise me to strike so as to give an advantage to my enemy. To tell me I must conquer by main force, and not by stratagem. Is not the great art of fighting, to menace one place, and to strike another ?"

He mentions a silly story of the christians at Jerusalem, who used to show, in the ruins of the temple, certain stones of a reddish color, which they pretended to have been stained by the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, who was slain between the temple and the altar. " I do not find fault (says he) with an error which pro-

\* In his Apolog. pro. lib. adv. Jovin. to which we may add Epist. 89. ad Pommach.

ceeds from a hatred toward the Jews, and a pious zeal for the christian faith." Oper. tom. 4, page 113.

It is unnecessary to multiply proofs against these saints. Their principles and practices are well calculated to tempt all honest men to conclude, that the spirit of christianity, as it was known, received, taught, and exemplified in the earliest ages of its history, from the close of the first to the close of the fourth century, was strongly connected with ignorance, credulity, superstition, fraud, forgery, and imposture. Nor have these marks and characters of the spirit of christianity been entirely omitted in modern times. Witness the Episcopalian forgeries and mistranslations; the pious stories of the priests of the Romish church; and the inveterate bigotry and intolerance that has always characterized the devoted followers of St. Dominic and John Calvin.

[It will be recollected by some of my audience, what a hue and cry there was made, because I stated, in the Prince-street church, that the New Testament writers sometimes quoted the Old Testament scriptures by way of *accommodation*. But what would have been said if I had charged Paul with using "*dissimulation*," as Jerom has done? Yea, more; Jerom quoted Paul as an example to justify his own practice in the same art! That Paul was guilty of all that I charged him with, there can be no doubt by any one who will examine the subject; but I never supposed him so guilty as Jerom has represented him; neither do I *now* think him so verily guilty. But a guilty man always looks for precedents to cover his own crimes. It was probably so with Jerom.]

## LECTURE VI.

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### ACCOUNT OF THE ANCIENT FATHERS CONTINUED.

“ Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thes. v. 21.

AUGUSTIN. Saint Augustin, Saint Austin, Bishop of Hippo, in Africa. I omit the notorious falsehoods and absurdities detailed as true by this famous saint, on the subjects of monks, monkery, and miracles. I shall notice only the accusations of which Barbeyrac has so well furnished the proofs.

[As in the life of Origen, so here, in the life of St. Austin, I omit some things, which delicacy forbids that I should publicly repeat; but, if any are curious to make themselves acquainted with all the pious notions of the ancient christian fathers, I would refer them to the Correspondent, where they will find a more circumstantial account; and should any one examine fully into this matter, possessing the religious feelings of modern christians, I would ask him how he will reconcile the liberal recommendations of St. Austin, (the loaning of wives, &c.) with his present orthodox notions.]

He declares (ib. 290 et seq.) that all the goods and possessions of the wicked, do not really belong to the ostensible owners and possessors, but to the saints, the righteous, the church of God. He is the first and chief defender of persecution for the sake of religion; the propounder of

those tenets, on which the holy inquisition has all along proceeded ; and of that pious hatred against heterodoxy, which leads to the extermination of those who are obnoxious to that dreadful charge. The persecution of the reformed in France, is justified on the authority of St. Austin, whose 93d Epist. to Vincent, and 185th to Boniface, were translated and republished in defence of that measure. I forget whether that protestant St. Dominic, John Calvin, cites him; but they were a congenial pair.

This grand patriarch of persecution seems to have adopted and embraced with all the ardor of conviction, the following mild and benign precept of the Jewish law-giver, 13 Deut. 6—10. “If thy brother, the son of thy mother—or thy son—or thy daughter—or the wife of thy bosom—or the friend which is as thy own soul—entice thee secretly, saying, let us go and serve other Gods which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, namely the Gods of the people which are around about thee, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end to the other, even the other end of the earth—then shalt thou not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, neither shall thine eye pity him, nor shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first on him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people : and thou shalt stone him with stones till he die ; because he has sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.” Surely, if the Almighty, so impartial, chose to harden the heart of Pharaoh, he has chosen also to harden the hearts of his chosen people, Jewish and christian ! In what other language the devil could express his cruelest wishes, I am at a loss to conjecture.

By *idolatry* is meant the horrible crime of ceasing to

be the dupes of one set of priests, and becoming the dupes of another. Doubtless, burning, crucifying, impaling, and torturing, are chastisements too mild for an offence so abominable ! Yet there are christians, such as our calvinistic presbyterian clergy, who are not ashamed to declare the Pentateuch, and this passage among the rest of it, to be a book dictated and delivered by divine inspiration !

St. Augustin, not satisfied with the slowness of proceeding of the council of Carthage, in 408, who had determined to write to Honorius on the suppression of the Donatists, wrote himself to Olympius, the favorite of the emperor, and procured the passage of that law against the Donatists, which subjects them to the punishment of death. Codex Theodos. lib. 16. tit. De Hæreticis, leg. 44. It is true, he pretends to be adverse to putting them to death ; but any punishment short of that falls within the due correction, which he wishes to be applied. As to the Pagans, however, he approves highly of the capital punishment to which they were condemned for exercising the religion of their ancestors.\*

And here I will close my sketch of a set of writers concerning whom it may be truly said, that it is difficult to determine whether folly or knavery were most predominant among them. Writers worthy of no credit, either for their critical acumen, their sound judgment, or their veracity ; qualities which, however necessary to the establishment of the cause they would wish to support, they have no real pretensions to. It is melancholy to think, that

\* See the proofs set forth by Barbeyrac in his *traite de la morale des peres*, quarto, 305—307, and also from 193 to 200, to which I have to add that I have myself verified these references in the same edition of St. Augustin's works, in 10 volumes fol. ed. Paris, 1696, by the Benedictines of St. Maur. The chief passage relating to the persecution of the Donatists referred to by Barbeyrac, is in the life of St. Augustin, lib. 6, chapter 6, page 297.

modern christianity should depend on the writings of this dishonest class of men, who in addition to their own forgeries and deceptive statements, procured the destruction by law (2 and 3 Jortin's Rem. page 205) of the books of all their opponents, whether called pagans or heretics. It is melancholy to think, that the evidence of the genuineness of the christian gospels, should depend exclusively upon citations, and extracts of men, who cite indiscriminately books undoubtedly forged, and books suspiciously genuine. Men, who had no sense or learning to discriminate—no knowledge of the canons of historical evidence sufficient to preserve them from being deceived themselves—and no honesty to induce them to refrain from deceiving others, by citing what they knew to be forged, and many of them by forging themselves when it appeared conducive to the cause they had to support. A class of writers who sprang up with christianity, and whose fraudulent propensities have been but too successfully propagated from their days to ours.\*

\* That we may understand the general feeling of priests respecting the rest of mankind, whom they usually denominate the people, let us hear one of the doctors of the church. "The people, says Synesius, bishop of Ptolemais, early in the fifth century, (in Calv. page 315) are desirous of being deceived: we cannot act otherwise respecting them. Such was the case with the ancient priests of Egypt; and for this reason they shut themselves up in their temples, and there composed their mysteries out of the reach of the people's eye; (forgetting what he had just before said, he adds) for had the people been in the secret, they might have been offended at the deception played upon them. In the mean time, how is it possible to conduct one's self otherwise with the people, so long as they are the people? For my own part, to myself I shall always be a philosopher, but in dealing with the mass of mankind, I shall be a priest.

"A little jargon, says Gregory of Nazianzen to St. Jerom, (Hieronym. ad Nep.) is all that is necessary to impose upon the people. The less they comprehend, the more they admire. Our forefathers and doctors of the church have often said, not what they thought, but what circumstances and necessity dictated to them.

The first complete list of christian forgeries was published by Toland, in his *Amyntor*, and more perfect in the first volume of his miscellaneous works ; and which has now fully stood the test of criticism. Then Jeremiah Jones published also a good catalogue in his new method of settling the canon of Scripture, vol. 2, page 119 ; this has been republished at the end of Hone's Collection of the Apocryphal Gospels. Readers in general are content to pin their faith on authority, and do not recur to these learned works of laborious research ; otherwise I do not see how any cause could have survived such a dreadful accumulation of forgery and fraud. The facilities afforded to forgery and interpolation, when all books were manuscripts, were far greater than in the present day.

In giving the preceding account, I have for the most part taken my authorities at second hand, from Dodwell, Middleton, Lardner, Jones, Daillie, Jortin, Mosheim, Barbeyrac, Priestley, Horsley : moderns of distinguished character, well settled in reputation, and unimpeachable ; all of them christians by profession ; and to whose fairness, as well as learning, there neither is, or can be, any objection. Where my second-hand authority is not cited, I rely on originals as I have quoted them : very many of my second hand authorities, where I thought there could be doubt, I have verified laboriously : and *I profess myself ready to authenticate every original citation that may be really disputed, because I possess the means of doing so* : and if I do not in every case cite the origi-

“ We endeavour, says Sanconiaton, (in Euseb. præp. Evang. lib. 3.) to excite admiration by means of the marvellous.”

Bishop Syrensius, Jerom, Gregory of Nazianzen, Eusebius, are among the most illustrious fathers of the church ; and dreadful rogues they seem to have been ! Yet, how much has the christian world assumed as true, on the authority of these men ! It is high time to adopt some common sense system of historical criticism.



nal authorities, it is because few persons in the United States are in possession of the books necessary to follow me. I refer, therefore, for the most part, to authors easy to be procured ; authors, that every man of tolerable learning possesses ; authors, that no clerical library ought to want ; and authors absolutely unimpeachable.

I proceed with my next object of enquiry.

*What reason have we to prefer the authenticity of the present gospels over contemporary and acknowledged forgeries ?*

I know of none, but the gradual selection made by Melito, Origen, and Jerom, and some other fathers, without any sufficient discrimination, without any reason but popular opinion, without any critical examination into their authority, and without any conclusive reason yet assigned, for adoption or rejection.

The following facts are certain :

The Jews of our Saviour's day, *spake* the Syriac language, 5 Mark, 41. 7 Mark, 34. 9 Acts, 40. 13 Neh. 23 : they *quoted* from the Hebrew ; as in that passage of the psalms, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani : He asks for vinegar, says a soldier, misunderstanding him : for Hilor Hely is in Syriac, vinegar. The Hebrew for vinegar, is *hhometz*. (One jot) 4 Matt. 18. The Syriac jot is smaller than the Hebrew.

If there was any gospel written therefore for the use of the Jews, it would have been a Syriac gospel. None such as an original ever existed, so far as we know. We have a Syriac *version*. Why was a Syriac version necessary ? And why were the originals in any other language ? Matthew is supposed to have written Hebrew ; and the gospel of the Ebionites mentioned by Epiphanius and Jerom, is said to have been in Hebrew : if so, the common Jews

could not understand it; for Hebrew ceased to be spoken after the captivity. 13 Neh. 23.

If Matthew wrote a gospel at all, where is the evidence of it? I have searched for it in vain: it does not exist. The author of St. Matthew's gospel, does not say, "I, Matthew, wrote this." I know the supposition, that the Ebionite and Nazarene gospel was St. Matthew's: who dare assert this is any thing but bare supposition? Assuredly it is not the original of our common Greek version, for it did not contain the two first chapters of our present copy. Of this original gospel of St. Matthew no known copy ever was seen, by any positive witness to the fact. How comes it that all the gospels are in Greek? The apostles were unlettered, ignorant men, 4 Acts, 15; they lived, or ~~are~~ said to have lived, many years in Jerusalem after the death of Christ. Where did they learn Greek? Why did these strict Jews, (for they were so, reproving the time-serving St. Paul because he was not so,) why did they write to their own countrymen, in a language which they did not use themselves, and which their own countrymen could not understand? Josephus wrote in Syriac for the Jews; and then had his works translated into Greek for the benefit of the learned world.

*Who* translated Matthew into Greek? From what original? *When* did this happen? Can a book be regarded as authentic whereof we know neither the author nor the language in which it was written, nor when originally published, nor who translated it, nor when it was translated? These are fatal deficiencies in the evidence. Does this lame account savor of divine origin?

Is there the slightest evidence of any christian book, anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem, or till the close of the first century? I have examined for such evidence in vain. Conjectures abound, but no positive proof or well

grounded probability can be pointed out. Indeed, considering the dispersion of that people, and the confusion they must have been in for at least twenty years after that event, it is utterly incredible that any book for the use of the Jews, except the narration of that siege, should have been thought of. They had something else to do than either to compose books or read them.

None of the evangelists to whom the gospels are ascribed, pretend to be the authors of them. None of them seem to know any thing of the existence of the rest, except that Mark and others seem to have borrowed from Matthew, without acknowledgment or reference.

There is no reference to, or any citation from, any of these evangelists by name, or by distinct allusion, as the authors of our modern gospels, until Irenæus, one hundred and fifty years after the death of Christ. Upon what grounds and reason this silly man ascribes them to the four evangelists, no where appears. I call him silly, because I have proved him so.

These gospels appeared contemporarily with a crowd of forgeries now known to be so, but which were considered in their day as equally authentic with our present gospels: nor is there any good reason why they should not be so considered now.

Jones and Lardner have, with great diligence, collected from the ancient fathers, all the quotations and expressions that seem to bear even a remote similarity to sentences and expressions in our modern gospels: hence they infer, that these sentences and expressions, so collected by them, are copied and cited from our modern books, which must then have existed. But gospels known to be forged, are cited by the ancient writers indiscriminately with those supposed to be genuine; and from whence the passages are taken no where appears; they may as well be from

the one class as from the other. All is doubt, conjecture, supposition: nothing clear, distinct, and certain. The oldest evidence relating to our present gospels, is so intermingled with the equal pretensions of fraud and forgery, that we cannot trace when our present gospels got footing among christians. Here is a revelation; one would reasonably expect that if it is to come to us at second-hand, and if instead of a revelation to *us*, we are required to be content with a story of a revelation to *others*—we have good right to expect that the whole account should be void of dispute and difficulty; but we find nothing but doubt and darkness, fraud and forgery, on all sides; and we are left to grope our way out of this chaos of gospels as well as we can. In our anxious search after truth, we call out, let there be light! but there is no light; darkness still rests on the face of the deep. *Sedet, in æternumque sedebit!*

No pagan writer gives us any aid. We hear of christians and Christ as popular rumours, or in a vague and general way, from Pliny the younger, Tacitus, and Suetonius—but nothing certain, nothing particularized; no history of the sect; no authentication of any gospel fact; no mention of any of the books or writings of the christians; no christian writer, numerous as the christian forgeries were, is once noticed by the learned pagans of the day; the christians seem to have been confounded with the Jews. All the books of the New Testament, although if genuine they must be widely spread in the days of Tacitus and Suetonius, are to these classic authors, as if they had never existed; which indeed is almost the only rational way of accounting for this utter silence and neglect concerning them.

Who wrote the gospel of Mark? Mark does not claim it; the other evangelists do not ascribe it to him. When

was it written ? Where ? To whom ? What, my christian friends ! not an answer to any one of these important questions ?

Who wrote the gospels of Luke and John ? Who were these men so called ? What evidence is there beyond supposition and conjecture, and that perfectly gratuitous, that these were the persons of Christ's own days ? When and where were these gospels first published ? Who cites them before Irenæus ?

I challenge any christian to answer these questions satisfactorily, abiding by the common rules of ascertaining that a work is really the work of the author to whom it is ascribed. I know how many fallacious pages can be penned, of declamation grounded on conjecture and possibility. I know that no evidence, properly so called, can be adduced in support of these books, that would not be scouted in the most lax and careless court of justice. Of direct and positive evidence in support of these books, there is none. But is it doubtful evidence that we are to expect from divine inspiration ? Is our religious belief to depend on the anxious and difficult, and, indeed, impossible task, of secerning, by much learned and laborious research, the forged evidence from the true ? Are these the terms and conditions imposed upon every honest enquirer into the truth of the christianity he is required to believe ! Of the hundred books either carefully read through, or diligently and faithfully consulted by me, on the present occasion, the ancient fathers, from Justin Martyr to Augustin, leaving out the apostolic fathers, consist of thirty volumes in folio ; and I can solemnly declare, that I have no motive or interest in this enquiry, direct or indirect, but to search out the truth for my own guidance, and for the sake of others to declare it as I find it. What kind of christianity is that which men take upon trust from their

parsons ; Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Socinian, Calvinist, Lutheran, Arian, or Trinitarian ? From parsons, nine tenths of whom, in these United States, never took the trouble of investigating the grounds and foundations of their own faith, and who have neither the learning, the leisure, nor the library that will enable them to do it. A class of men more ignorant of all useful knowledge than any other in the community ; a class of men more proud, more conceited, more ambitious, more money-loving and avaricious, more intolerant, and more eaten up by the esprit de corps, than any other known class, and who have voluntarily disqualified themselves from being witnesses in the cause now before us, by receiving pay and emolument for preaching and advocating one side of it, and abusing as infidels all those who, not being interested in the question beyond the common interest that truth excites, see reason to adopt the other side. Fellow citizens, I appeal to your good sense, who are most likely to mislead you ; those who, basking in the sunshine of popular prejudice, are hired, paid, bribed to take up one side of a question, and who live by supporting and defending it—or those who come before you unprotected, unpaid, unbribed, unhired, and unprostituted ? Judge for yourselves as a jury would judge, deciding on the common rules of testimony.

Moreover, how can you expect truth from the lips of men whom you hire to foster and defend all your preconceived opinions on religious subjects ? All the absurd stories which you have heard, and all the absurd and intolerant opinions forced upon your pliant understandings, during the long period from the nursery to college ? Who, if they were to venture, in a fit of honest conviction, to avow opinions inconsistent with your prejudices, would be rewarded by being turned out to starve ? Is it from such

men you can expect to hear truth ! No : it is from those who do not depend upon your base hire ; who are indifferent whether the truth pleases or offends you ; who are willing to encounter popular prejudice, and to seek and to speak the truth through evil report and through good report—it is from such persons, who feel their own independence, and who acknowledge no obligation except to what is honest, just, and true—it is from such, and such only, that you will hear and read what a truth-seeking spirit alone can dictate.

#### EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY CONCLUDED.

I have hitherto laid before the reader a brief account and character of the evidence on which christianity actually rests. Let us now consider a summary of the rules of evidence and testimony adopted in our courts of justice.

Hearsay is no evidence ; for we have no means of interrogating the informant, or of judging of his opportunities of information, his qualifications, or his character. Of course, the hearsay of an hearsay of an hearsay, is absolutely worthless.

Witnesses, therefore, who have no personal knowledge of the transactions, are inadmissible. Why are not the immediate witnesses to the fact itself produced ?

Even if hearsay were admissible, we ought to know minutely every thing relating to the informant, that we may judge of the value of his account. A narrator, therefore, who does not tell his authority for every dubious fact, is of no account.

If the best evidence be not adduced, we ought to be informed why it is not.

If hearsay evidence of a recent fact be inadmissible, evi-

dence of a fact that happened a century ago, now offered for the first time, is not worth a moment's attention.

Witnesses interested in the event of a contested cause, are inadmissible; for they have a bias on their minds to speak as their interest tempts them.

Hence witnesses who are hired or paid by one party, are incompetent.

So are witnesses who gain their living by supporting a particular interest, or one side of a disputed question.

So are witnesses who belong to a particular party, and are liable to be warped by the *esprit de corps*; particularly in a religious question.

Witnesses incompetent to judge of a fact from want of education and knowledge, are not admissible. The tricks of a juggler would be miracles to a country boor who had never seen such before.

Witnesses guilty of habitual falsehood are inadmissible; especially if they deem falsehood allowable in the particular case.

Witnesses who contradict each other, are mutually destructive of each others testimony, if their values be equal.

If a witness depose to a fact, not noticed by persons present at the time, of equal veracity, and who must have noticed it had it happened, he is not to be believed if the negative testimony be strong and unimpeachable.

In proportion as any fact is antecedently important, or improbable, the stronger, the clearer, the more unimpeachable is the evidence of it required to be. Common evidence for a common fact; stronger in proportion as the fact is uncommon.

There are such innumerable instances recorded of pretended miracles, proved by testimony apparently veracious, that all evidence adduced for the purpose of proving a miracle, is, *a priori*, incredible; for the uniform course of hu-



man experience, in all civilized countries, and among all men of learning, is in opposition to the competency, or the veracity of such evidence.

Therefore, if such evidence of a miracle be liable to any of the objections above stated, it is inadmissible for the purpose for which it is adduced.

Let us very briefly run over the Christian facts, bearing in mind, and carrying with us the foregoing principles of deciding on human testimony, which no man, conversant with the investigations of disputed facts, will for a moment controvert.

The evidence of the doings and sayings of Jesus Christ, are to be found in the four gospels. If these be deficient in authenticity, we have absolutely no evidence whatever; for christians, by common consent, have rejected every other. I ask, then,

1. Who are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? They are supposed to be the authors of these gospels, but they do not say so themselves, and no one says so for them till 150 years after the supposed death of Christ.

2. Luke expressly says he was a compiler. Mark is supposed to have written what he heard from Peter. Of Matthew we know nothing. Of John less. But be they who they may be, none of them claim the authorship; none of them declare who wrote the accounts—none of them declare they were present at the transactions—none of them vouch for the facts as true on their own personal knowledge. So far as appears, all is hearsay, traditional evidence of facts and sayings, which, to be accurately related, could not be told from memory, but must have been written down quickly.

3. Not knowing any how, but by conjecture, the writers of these gospels, and being absolutely ignorant when

and where they were written, we have no means of judging how far they are worthy of credit.

4. The best evidence is not produced. Why did not Christ publish his own doctrines, if they were so important to the world, and not leave them to the frail memory of any transient narrator—of nobody knows who? Why did not these evangelists declare who they were, and how they came to write the accounts we possess, and on what evidence they offer to the public these narrations? It is not likely that unlearned and ignorant men should thus turn authors in a language to which they were unaccustomed—in a language not understood by, or in use among the people they addressed—if they did, why do they not say so expressly? why not tell us how it happened, that, being Syriac Jews, they came to learn Greek? why not remove these reasonable doubts?

So, of the main fact, the *resurrection*, the promise and the boast was made in public—the execution of Jesus Christ as a malefactor was public—the challenge to a resurrection was given in public. The performance, according to every evidence we possess of it, was secret, clandestine, concealed from those for whose conviction it was promised—and Jesus Christ, if he ever lived, or died, or rose, (all equally doubtful,\*) sneaked about after his resurrection

\* *Nonexistence of Christ.*—"To the question, then," says Mr. Taylor, "On what grounds do you deny that such a person as Jesus Christ existed, as a man?" The proper answer is, "because his existence as a man has, from the earliest day on which it can be shown to have been asserted, been as earnestly and strenuously denied, and that, not by enemies of the christian name, or unbelievers of the christian faith, but by the most intelligent, most learned, most sincere of the christian name; who ever left the world proofs of their intelligence and learning in their writings, and of their sincerity in their sufferings."

"And, because the existence of no individual of the human race, that was real and positive, was ever, by a like conflict of jarring evidence, rendered equivocal and uncertain." *Diegesis*, p. 254.

like a thief from the officers of justice—known only among the male and female bigots of his own party, and departing finally from among a few witnesses whose names and characters, with the chief circumstances that must have attended his departure, are left untold, or told without particulars, or in any manner that will allow us to judge of the truth of the fact. Why did he not put the question to rest by appearing publicly after his resurrection, and by causing the public evidence of it to be preserved?

5. The apostles, the disciples of Christ, followed preaching as a trade, and lived at their ease upon the credulity of the multitude after Christ's death. St. Paul, who was a tent maker, absolutely boasts of his disinterestedness for having worked a short time at his trade, while he travelled about as a preacher? Even the brothers, the family of Jesus Christ, who deemed him, while living, an impostor, and who had the best right to judge whether he was so or not, quitted their business, and travelled about with their wives, subsisting on the credulity of the ignorant believers.

The most learned of the first christians, who were afterwards considered heretics, by the ruling party, "denied the humanity of Christ."

"Within the immediate year of the alleged crucifixion of Christ," says Mr. Taylor, "or sooner than any other account of the matter could have been made known, it was publicly taught, that instead of having been miraculously born, and having passed through the impotence of infancy, boyhood, and adolescence, he had descended on the banks of the Jordan in the form of perfect manhood; that he had imposed on the senses of his enemies and of his disciples, and that the ministers of Pilate had wasted their impotent rage on an airy phantom." Cotelerius has a strong passage to this effect, that, "it would be, as it were, to deny that the sun shines at mid-day, to question the fact that this was really the first way in which the gospel story was related." Ibid, p. 368.

Gerdon, though a christian, taught that "our Saviour Jesus Christ, was not born of a virgin, nor did appear at all in the flesh, nor had he descended from heaven; but that he was seen by men only *putatively*, that is, they fancied they saw him, but did not see him in reality, for he was only a *shadow*, and seemed to suffer, but in reality did not suffer at all." Ibid, p. 369

Are such men competent witnesses to prove the truth of the lie that supports them ?

6. All the apostles, and the populace whom they addressed, were of the lowest and most ignorant class of the community; untaught ignorant men. Acts iv. 13. They were not capable of judging, and do not appear to have taken any pains to investigate; for instance, whether a person pretending to be sick was really so; whether the cure was real or pretended; whether it was effected by casting out a pretended devil, that occupied the patient, or by curing epileptic fits; whether the cure was momentary or permanent, &c.

These apostles, then, are open to every objection to which any incompetent witness can be liable. They were ignorant; they were interested; they formed a religious party; they lived by it as a profession; if any of them wrote our modern gospels, they contradicted each other in several important particulars, especially as to the resurrection. They notice as true, facts impossible; such as the graves opening, the dead arising, and parading through the streets of Jerusalem; they notice as true, phenomena that must have been noticed and recorded by every philosopher and historian of the time, as the earthquake and darkness at the crucifixion, wherein no writer whatever corroborates them; they relate the most improbable occurrences, and the most useless and suspicious miracles, upon the slightest hearsay evidence, with no attendant care of investigation so as to remove doubt and suspicion; and as to the very existence of Jesus Christ, it is rendered extremely dubious, by the omission of any mention of him by Philo Judæus, his countryman and contemporary, and by Josephus, who was born within a year or two of Christ's asserted crucifixion.

Who has a right to assert the existence of a man upon

the evidence of these evangelists, who were themselves never named until 150 years after the death of the supposed author of christianity? That some seditious fanatic may have been put to death under the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, is possible; and that he may have had disciples, like Johanna Southcote, or Jemima Wilkinson, is possible also; and that the Gentile followers of this Jew malefactor may have named him *Christos*, anointed, is possible also; but it is next to impossible, that the Jews, who spake Syriac, should have dubbed their religious leader by a *Greek* title. This appellation is manifestly the after thought of some Gentile fanatic.

The time is approaching, gradually, indeed, but surely, when this outrageous system of fraud and robbery—this imposition upon the understanding of the weak and the ignorant, for the purpose of obtaining their money under false pretences, will be consigned, as it deserves, to public execration. The friends of mankind, however, must intermit no effort to enlighten the ignorant, and expose, under all its aspects, this baneful imposture.\*

\* Melito, bishop of Sardis, who lived about A. D. 144, in his address to the emperor Marcus Antoninus, says, "For the philosophy which we profess, truly flourished aforetime among the barbarous nations; but, having blossomed again, (or been transplanted,) in the great reign of thy ancestor Augustus, it proved to be above all things ominous of good fortune to the kingdom." See the whole of this passage, in the *Diægesis*, p. 319, on which Mr. Taylor makes the following remarks: "This document—and it is wholly indisputable—is absolutely fatal to all the pretended historical evidences of christianity, inasmuch as it demonstrates the facts—

1. "That it is not true that christians, as such, had ever, at any time, been the objects of any extensive or notorious political persecution.

2. "That it is not true that christianity had any such origin, as has been generally imagined for it.

3. "That it is not true that it made its first appearance at the time generally assigned; for *πρὸτερον ἡκμασεν*, it had flourished before that time.

4. "That it is not true that it originated in Judea, which was a province of the Roman Empire; for it was an importation from some foreign countries, which lay beyond the boundaries of that empire." p. 329.

The Rev. Mr. Jeremiah Jones, in his "New Method," vol. 1, page 70, lays down the following among other propositions for ascertaining the genuine or apocryphal character of any book; in which we cordially agree, and request the reader to apply them for himself:—

"That book is apocryphal which contains contradictions, or which contains histories, or proposes doctrines, contrary to those which are known to be true; or which contains ludicrous, trifling, fabulous, or silly relations; or which contains anachronisms; or wherein the style is clearly different from the known style of the author whose name it bears."

All this is reasonable. But do the evangelists contain no contradictions? No relations in opposition to known facts? No accounts, ludicrous, trifling, silly, or fabulous; is the devil tempting Christ, none such? Is the miraculous conception, or the miracle at Cana, none such? However, let the reader judge.

I proceed, according to my proposal, *to compare, in a general way, the value of religion, particularly of the christian religion, with the evils that arise from the abuse of it.*

From the very earliest appearance of the christians, and christianity, the earth has been overrun with bigotry, intolerance, private disputes, public war—with envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness; specially imputable to the quarrels of christians among themselves. The christians, from the very outstart of the sect, were universally detested: *odio humani generis convicti*, says Tacitus. The christian writers, as a class, were the most abandoned liars, forgers, interpolators, mutilators, and destroyers, that the whole history of literature, from the beginning of knowledge to the present day, is able to present to us. There has been nothing like them: nothing so

shamelessly abandoned. Of all this I hope I have produced ample proof, from the acknowledgment of christian divines. Then why did these divines believe in christianity? Because man is a creature of circumstances. Because they were bred from infancy to manhood among christians; because every body around them, their mothers, their nurses, their fathers, their teachers, their older and revered friends, their own companions, were christians; they were taught that it would be criminal to doubt the truth of christianity; infidelity was held out to them as an unpardonable crime; they were brought up to the profession of christianity as to a trade by which they were to gain wealth, and consideration, and respect, among their countrymen; they were ruined in all respects if they renounced their error, however deeply convinced of it. How much of all this operates among professing christians at the present day, and even in this country! But certainly with nothing like the force here that it does in Europe. Still, I cannot help feeling deeply the excuses for hypocrisy that arise from this state of things. The prevalence of education and a free press, are alone competent to cure the evil. But all education here is, as yet, an abominable fraud, and a most unjustifiable abuse of the power acquired over the infant mind; we have yet a bigoted public, nor, in this most enlightened country upon the earth, is the press as free as it is in England and Germany.

What does this religion of miracles amount to? Granting that the silly and trifling miracles of the New Testament took place, they were miracles only to those who saw them; they are only human testimony to me. Considering the innumerable instances of human testimony bearing witness to miracles that we know to have been frauds, the result of experience is, that every alleged miracle is in a high degree improbable. Certainly it is incre-

dible, if any reasonable objection can be made to the testimony in favor of it. Is there a human creature bold enough to say, after due investigation, that there are not many very strong, indeed, unanswerable objections to the christian miracles, external as to their evidence, and internal as to their character? Is there any person who has effrontery enough to deny that the question has many and serious doubts and difficulties? But if such doubts and difficulties really exist, they are conclusive against the system that involves them. For does the Almighty deal darkly with his creatures? Does he require, on pain of punishment, full faith in a doctrine beset with difficulties on every hand? What reasonable man can believe this? Such a doctrine, so involved in clouds and thick darkness, may be the result of the imperfect faculties, and very deficient knowledge of fallible men, but it cannot proceed from divine omnipotence and perfection: if God be all wise and all good; if he be pre-eminently the God of truth—doubt, and difficulty, and error, and falsehood, and fraud, and forgery, are not the means of conviction he would condescend to employ; whatever the priest may teach to the contrary. Consider further what kind of a God christianity presents to us. A being, who, if we may believe the Old Testament, is wrathful, irritable, revengeful, cruel, unforgiving, capricious, proud, tyrannical—a compound of all the worst passions with which the christian priests have clothed their devil. This is the being we are commanded to love and adore! To such a being we are to offer prayers, and render thanks! For what? Is he to be moved from his purpose by prayers and entreaties like a silly woman? Cannot he bestow what is needful, without beseeching and flattery? Then, again, for what are we to thank him? Did we place ourselves



here? Did he not place us here for his own good will and pleasure, to serve his own purposes, not ours?

Oh, but he is the great and omnipotent creator, and moral governor of the universe! Is he so? What proof is there of this? I know of none. I know of no creator extraneous to, and different from, the universe I behold. How, you say, could the universe create itself? How, say I, could God create himself? Oh, but he has existed from all eternity! Has he so; so then has the universe; there is at least as much proof of the last assertion as of the first. God, you say, is the moral governor of the universe. Is he so? A very miserable one then he is. Why does he permit so many innocent beings to be destroyed, or reduced to misery, by earthquakes, by wars, by pestilence, by famine, and all the multitudinous evils that prey upon mankind?

Either God could put an end to moral and physical evil, and he will not, or he is willing to do it but he cannot, or he is neither able nor willing. What, then, becomes of his attributes—his infinite power and infinite goodness? Here, says a priest, holding up the bible—here is the word of God—here is the book of divine inspiration, containing every truth necessary to eternal salvation. But God has appointed an order of men, to instruct their fellow creatures by explaining, illustrating, and enforcing these divine truths. This order of men is the christian clergy.

Indeed! so it appears that God Almighty has spoken so unintelligibly, that it requires 12,000 clergymen in England, as many in the United States, and 100,000 more throughout Europe, to supply God Almighty's deficiencies, and to explain what he has spoken darkly and unintelligibly! Is it so? Well, begin; explain to us. Oh, no! say the clergy; you must first engage to pay us from 1000 to 4000 dollars a year each! Is it worth while

to keep an army of parsons in perpetual pay at this rate, to perpetuate this deception—to preach up falsehood as if it were solemn truth—falsehood that they know to be so;—is it for the public good to encourage this system of exacting money under false pretences? Is it, or is it not, swindling?\*

\* “If the evidences of the christian religion are presumed to be its divine effects upon the dispositions and conduct of its professors; the peculiar generosity and liberality of christians towards the enemies and opposers of their faith; their willingness to have its foundation thoroughly sifted and examined; their readiness at all times to acquaint themselves with all the objections which can be brought against it, by whomsoever, or in what manner soever, those objections may be urged; their abhorrence of all acts of slander and defamation, for the sake of excusing themselves from the trouble of enquiry; their immaculate innocence, not only of persecution direct and overt, but of the dispositions that could possibly lead to persecution; their more rational piety, their more exalted virtue, their more diffusive benevolence. Alas! where are those evidences?

“We have looked for historical evidence which might justify a rational man to himself, in believing the christian religion to be of God. And there are none—absolutely none. We enquired for the moral effects which the prevalence of this religion through so many ages and countries of the world, has produced on men’s minds, and we find more horrors, crimes, and miseries, occasioned by this religion, and its bad influence on the human heart; more sanguinary wars among nations; more bitter feuds and implacable heart burnings in families; more desolation of moral principle; more of every thing that is evil and wicked, than the prevalence of any vice, or of all vices put together, could have caused: so that the evidence which should make it seem probable, that God had designed this religion to prevail among men, would only go to show that he had designed to plague and curse them. But not so; christian, hold first! and ask thine own heart if thou *hast not charged God foolishly*. Ask thine own convictions, whether, if a religion were the wickedest that ever was upon earth, and as false as it was wicked, God himself could give thee any more likely, or fairer and sufficient means to emancipate thy mind from it, than the means thou hast here, (if thou wilt use them) to discover the real origin, character, and evidences of christianity. If thou believest there is any God at all, at any rate, thou should also believe that *he is a God of truth*; and so sure as he is so, so sure it is, that the pertinacious belief of any thing as true, which we might, by the free exercise of our rational faculties, come to discover to be false, is the greatest sin that a man can commit against him; implicit faith is the greatest of crimes; and the implicit believer is the most wicked of mankind.” *Taylor’s Diegesia*, p. 413.

## LECTURE VII.

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### CONCLUSION.

“ Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thes. v. 21.

[IN this concluding lecture,\* before giving my own conclusion, I shall first give you the conclusion of my learned and worthy friend, which being but recently received, did not appear in the Correspondent, nor was it delivered in the Hall; but I add it here as a valuable appendage. It was written after a careful review of all that appears in the essays, and as a *conclusion* to the whole matter.]

Hence it appears, that the historical evidence in favour of the christian scriptures, is deficient in every particular that men of good sense universally require to confer authenticity on history.

The best evidence, the writing or authentication of Jesus Christ himself, is totally wanting; nor was his ascension made in public, as it ought to have been. All the accounts we have are hearsay, second-hand stories. No means have ever been given of tracing them; no one knows *who* wrote any of the gospels; *when* they were written; *where* they were written; *in what language* they

\* This lecture is cut off from the sixth, being otherwise too long. It is, therefore, shorter than the others; but the matter will be supplied by a supplement from another hand.

were written ; why they appear in the Greek language, which the great mass of the Jews did not speak or read. No one knows why they did not appear originally in the Syriac, spoken as the common language of Judea.

No one knows why these supposed authors, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, do not appear as the authors, or claim the credit of the writings thus ascribed to them.

No one knows why these persons are not named as the authors of the gospels till 180 years after the christian era.

No one knows upon what grounds and reasons these silly and contradictory documents were selected from fifty forgeries, equally credited for more than a hundred and fifty years, and apparently having equal claims.

No one knows how it happens, that these writings should be received as genuine, notwithstanding the many and important interpolations contained in them, now known to be so ; and after the mutilations and corrections, and expunging of silly and incredible passages, by order of the Emperor Anastasius.

No one knows how it happens, that a Greek epithet is bestowed upon a Jew malefactor.

No one knows where these accounts first appeared ; silly, unlettered men like the apostles, *ανδρες αγραμματοι και ιδιωται*, from the lowest class of the people, would not write to the multitude in a language which, to the multitude, was a foreign language. Josephus wrote in Syriac.

All the apostles and first christians appear to have been interested to support the imposture. They made their living by it. They worked on the credulity of the early converts to institute a community of goods, of which these charlatans appointed themselves governors and distributors.

Christ's own relations, who treated him with marked contempt throughout his life, lived in ease and luxury on

the credulity of his followers after his death. This St. Paul relates.

Histories thus tainted with every mark and character of fraud and forgery, are held up by the lying priests of modern days as being of divine origin, and containing divine truths. Whereas, it was as easy for the divinity to present the world with an account free from all reasonable objection, as with the present very suspicious and unsatisfactory set of relations, written by men unknown, unlettered, ignorant, and interested.

None of these accounts are verified by any cotemporary pagan writer. The sect of christians, indeed, are mentioned as existing, and as being remarkable for their infamous conduct and character ; but we possess no historical corroboration or authentication of the writings called the gospels ; which no sensible man among the pagan authors of repute knew of, or credited if they did. Nor is there any evidence whatever—no, not one tittle, that the scriptures of the Old Testament are, in any respect, authentic as to the facts, or genuine as to the authors to whom they are ascribed ; not one corroborating historical evidence concerning them exists. They are full of anachronisms, and bear indubitable marks of being (one and all) composed after the horde of barbarians called Jews, were permitted to return from Babylon to Judea. Yet have the christian priesthood the insolent hardihood to talk of the divine authority of this gross imposture ! No wonder ; their vocation is imposture.

PHILO VERITAS.

[Now, my friends, what shall we say to these things? Agreeably to my original purpose and determination, I have laid before you all the important facts contained in the essays of "*Philo Veritas*," *a lover of truth*, as published in the Correspondent, and which I have embodied

in these lectures. If you know the impression they have made on your own minds, you may, in some measure, judge from that, what impressions they must have made on mine. To be candid, I must admit, they contain much information which is entirely new to me. It is true, I was in possession of many of these facts before, which had led me to nearly the same conclusion, on the whole, at which I have now arrived; and on that account, perhaps, I have been more inclined to believe what is here stated. As the learned author of these essays has quoted fairly the works I have read, so far as he has made use of them, I have reason to believe that the others, to which I have no access at present, are equally fairly quoted. For one, I shall think so, till I see it proved to the contrary.\* I have delivered nothing from the essays which appears to me to be erroneous, in point of fact, without noticing and correcting it. The principal error which I have discovered is, if Tacitus be good authority, (but I am convinced the passage is not his,†) there were christians at Rome in the days of Nero, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; whereas Veritas only admits that this evidence proves the existence of the christians in the days of Tacitus; that is, "towards the close of the first century." But this is not material. It proves nothing to the point, after all.

The language of Veritas is, perhaps, sometimes too severe; but it is necessary that the people hear something that will not only open their eyes, but also rouse their attention. If the many frauds committed by the ancient fathers of the christian church, were originally intentional, and used for party purposes, rather than the public good;

\* Since delivering these lectures, I have read Middleton's *Free Enquiry*; also Taylor's *Diegesis*, and am fully satisfied, that the facts, as set forth in the essays of Philo Veritas, are incontrovertible.

† See note A, in the Appendix.

and if they are now perpetuated with the same knowledge, and from the same unhallowed motives, then, as no deed can be more reprehensible, so no language can be too severe to express the indignation that every honest man must, and ought to feel towards such procedures. But if people can be so blinded by a false education as to think that the common people may be deceived for their good, and deceive with such a pure, though ignorant motive, while we would equally deprecate the deception, the deceiver is rather to be pitied than blamed. Knowing, therefore, how difficult it is to get rid of early impressions, however erroneous, we would recommend all possible charity towards those deluded mortals (especially as we have once belonged to the number) who really think it is best for mankind to believe in at least *some* of the miracles and wonderful stories taught in the Bible, whether they are true or not. As the Bible is supposed to contain one glorious truth, although fraught with a thousand *lies*, yet it is better, as some suppose, for mankind to believe the whole, and a thousand more foolish stories of the same stamp, than not to believe in this great and glorious TRUTH! But supposing this supposed glorious truth should turn out to be nothing more than a pious *lie* ; what then ? Is it best for mankind to believe a thousand foolish lies, for the sake of believing in one single fact that is acknowledged to be good if true, but which may not be true after all. As soon as it is found that mankind can be equally happy, and a thousand times more rational and consistent, in believing nothing but what is susceptible of proof, and to believe just in proportion to the strength of the evidence they have received ; and also, that all the benefit there is, or can be, in believing in any thing that is past, is only on account of the present conclusions, or the future prospects, that such a belief affords us, then people will be-

gin to reason, not only on the *truth*, but also on the *utility* of every proposition presented for their consideration, whether true or false. Let us first ask ourselves, is it any thing that affects or concerns us *now*? Is it any thing that will affect us at any *future time*? Or is it interesting only as a matter of curiosity? If neither of these, it is not any thing that deserves one moment's consideration.

To-day is just as valuable to me, whether there be another day for me or not. Nothing future can enhance the value of to-day. Nothing future *should*, nothing future *would*, if we were properly educated, lessen its value. If it be true, as we read, "sufficient for the day is its own TROUBLE," it is equally true, sufficient for the day is its own *joy*. If we anticipate only what is rational and true, the anticipation can do us no harm. It only prepares us for the actual enjoyment, or the actual suffering. If we anticipate what is neither rational nor true, we enjoy but an *imaginary* good, (if good it can be called,) or we endure an *imaginary* evil, which will never be enjoyed, or endured, in any other way. Now, who wants to feast on mere imagination, or to take trouble on trust, by anticipating it beforehand?

Let us, then, throw away at once all our imaginary and visionary dreams; all faith in things unseen, or in worlds unknown, and begin the world entirely anew.

Now, give us facts, and we will consider them; but we have done with fictions. Let us no longer use words that we do not understand, or words to which we have attached no definite meaning.

What are meant by the terms *God*, *devil*, *heaven*, *hell*, *angel*, *soul*, *spirit*? Is not the meaning which is generally attached to each of these words perfectly vague and indefinite? Do they mean any thing except what



exists only in the imagination? If so, why can they not be defined? Were it not for fashion and custom, I should no longer have occasion to use any of them. If I still retain and make use of the term God, it must be in a very different sense from what I have ever used the term before. This term once conveyed to my mind the *notion* (for I cannot call it *idea*) of some great being, unknown to me, but who, as I supposed and believed, had made himself known in former times to some of his creatures; that he had a throne somewhere in the universe, and sat upon it; that he had his messengers, or angels, who were constantly employed in his service, and who executed his will; that Jesus was his son, &c. I at length concluded that this idea was too *gross*, and imagined that God was an immaterial being, who was every where present; but though immaterial himself, he had power over all material bodies, as he had made them all. My notion of angels, devils, &c. was still about the same as before. But as my mind progressed in knowledge, in chymistry, geology, &c., and I became a little better acquainted with *real* matter, I saw the impropriety in supposing that immateriality could produce materiality; or that, being produced, or existing, it could have any effect upon it. This led me to conclude that God (who, as I still supposed, was absolutely indispensable,) must be a vital fluid of real matter, perhaps the elementary principle of all matter; but, whether he was so or not, I conceived all matter, originally, to have been self-existent, or eternal in its nature. These latter notions have been my views for about twelve or thirteen years; and, even *now*, I have no evidence of, neither do I believe in, the creation of matter. But the study of botany and physiology has taught me, that what we call life in plants, or sensation, and all the phenomena connected therewith,

in animals, is the *effect*, and not the *cause* of organization. Hence there is no such thing as life or intelligence (that we know any thing about) in the universe, except what is organic ; that is, the effect of organization. Hence I have arrived to the following conclusion, viz. that nature, throughout all nature, and in all her ramifications, ever did, and ever will, act like herself. Judging from all I know, there can be no doubt, in my mind, of this fact. Call it wisdom, call it power, call it fate, call it what you please—altering the name does not alter the thing. That there is nothing human, in any sense of the word, either in it, or about it, I am just as certain of, as I am certain that man is not the universe. And when we talk about intelligence, if it be not human intelligence, or the intelligence of animals that we mean, what do we mean by the term ? Hence I have no idea *now*, that my voice extends to any being in the universe, except to organized beings like myself, so as to produce any sensation or any effect whatever.\*

Let the universe, then, embracing all the heavenly and earthly bodies, move on in its course. We can neither accelerate nor retard its progress. Let us endeavor to catch the moments as they fly, so far as to enjoy them in passing ; for, did we wish to retain them, we cannot. Time, therefore, to us, is very precious ; let none of it be lost in fruitless toils, or be wasted in worthless pursuits ;

\* I have here expunged every thing which I advanced on the subject of prayer, being convinced that the ground is altogether untenable in every sense of the word in which prayer is thought to be useful by christians, and having since entirely laid aside the practice, I conclude that the remarks on that subject may be dispensed with. To pray to the elements, is vain and unmeaning ; and to pray to ourselves, or to our fellow beings, in a formal manner, seems to be too farcical to be warranted by rational creatures.

for time, once past, never did, never can return. Every moment produces some change. We shall never be again what we have been ; neither can we remain what we are. Be content, then, for the time being, to be as we are ; but let us better our condition if we can. And if we cannot better our own, let us try to improve that of posterity.

The particles which at first constituted our being, came together in that particular form without our knowledge, will, or consent. We have been supported in being, and grown to maturity, through a well known process of organic nature, and we yield obedience to this call, or process, because it gives us pleasure thus to do. It is a pleasure to eat when we are hungry, to drink when we are thirsty, and all the duties and necessary business of life, with a few exceptions, afford pleasurable, rather than painful sensations. Yea, the acts which are disagreeable in themselves, are necessary to our future comfort, and are performed for that purpose. In this way life is kept up, (unforeseen or unavoidable occurrences excepted,) as long as life is, or can be desirable. Not that we always retain the same identical particles of matter, for these are constantly changing ; but we sustain life as long as life is desired, or else as long as it can be supported, or is supportable. While life, therefore, is worth possessing, why should we not enjoy it in the best possible manner we can ? We have reason, wisdom, and discretion enough to do so, if we will only exercise the noble faculties we possess, and be determined to be no longer the dupes of an ambitious and aspiring priesthood. From such *craft*, to use a well known expression, I say, “ Good Lord deliver us.” AMEN.

## SUPPLEMENT TO LECTURE VII.

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I SHALL here add, by way of supplement to the seventh lecture, something on the internal evidence of the truth of christianity, as growing out of the books themselves; and also, (though I hardly think it necessary) a few remarks on the passage in Josephus.

The following are extracts from an unpublished lecture on the subjects to which they relate, and are added here with a view of making this work more complete.

Our first enquiry then is, what evidence out of, or distinct from the New Testament, can be found, that the name of Jesus Christ, or the sect of christians was known in Jerusalem, before the destruction of that city by Titus?

The advocates of christianity have, on this part of the enquiry, referred to the writings of Josephus, of Pliny, and of Tacitus, as affording evidence, not only of the existence of Jesus Christ, but that his followers were recognised in Judea, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem.

The passage attributed to Josephus, in which he is said to bear testimony to the character, miracles, and doctrines of Jesus Christ, is contained in the 18th book, chapter 3d, section 3d, of the English translation from the Greek, of his "*Jewish Antiquities*," and is as follows:

"Now there was about this time Jesus a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many of the Jews, and also many of the Gentiles. This was the Christ, or christian (ὁ χριστος οὗτος ην)—And when Pilate, at the instigation of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who loved him from the first, did not cease to adhere to him. For he appeared to them alive again, on the third day; the divine prophets having foretold this, and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe (or sect) of christians, so named from him, subsists to this time."

Had the passage I have just read really been written by Josephus, it would have been a self-condemnation from the mouth of a Jew—indeed from any man but a christian; for who but one who *actually believed* in the divine mission of Jesus, could have said that Jesus was *the Christ*, and that he *was a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure*. Yet we know that Josephus was a most rigid Jew, and had been a priest, if not high-priest of his nation.

Again, to say nothing of what Josephus is alleged to have affirmed in this passage, as to what the prophets said respecting the coming of Jesus, why was it that he did not mention the *books* of the New Testament, nor any one of them? How came he not to notice any of the *apostles*? He was born about the supposed period of Jesus' death, and writes the history of that period down to the taking of Jerusalem, at which he was present. This event happened about forty years after; and although he was allowed to possess all the requisites for an historian—learned, industrious, and candid—he says not a word about the evangelists; nor does he make the smallest allusion to the stupendous miracles said to have been performed by Jesus during his life; nor of the still more stupendous miracle of his ascension into heaven.

Josephus's father must have been an eye-witness of these miracles, and could not have failed to tell his son respecting them. The historian himself was related to Mariamne, Herod's wife, and is minutely particular on all that prince's proceedings; yet wholly silent as to the life and death of Jesus. Though neither concealing nor palliating Herod's cruelties, not a word does he say about his ordering the children to be massacred on an information that a king of the Jews was just born. According to the Greek calendar, the number of children put to death on that occasion amounted to 14,000. Of all the cruelties ever committed by all the tyrants that ever lived, this was the most horrible. A similar instance is not to be found in history: yet the best writer ever the Jews had, the only one of any account among the Romans and

Greeks, makes no mention of a transaction so very extraordinary, and so very dreadful.

If Josephus had actually known, or believed any thing about the pretended founder of christianity, we should have expected to find something on the subject in his account of the "Wars of the Jews." But in that work there is not a single expression which implies that he had ever heard of Jesus Christ, or of the names of the four evangelists as authors of any book or history whatever. Yet this work was written eighteen years before his "Antiquities," when all these transactions were recent, and ready to occur to the historian.

The authenticity of the spurious passage was long as strenuously defended as if the fate of christianity had depended upon it. Dr. Chalmers, indeed, thinks it undeserving of the least notice; for he says, "*the entire silence of Josephus upon the subject of christianity, though he wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, and gives us the history of that period in which Christ and his apostles lived, is certainly a very striking circumstance.*" In fact, it is now ascertained, beyond a doubt, that the interpolated passage is not in the *original work* of Josephus, which was written in Syriac; and we are indebted to the learned Photius for having ascertained, that the fraud was the *pious* work of a priest, named *Cuis*, who lived in the third century, and who evidently was not aware that more than one copy of the work of Josephus was extant in the original. Eusebius, who has been charged with the forgery, may have countenanced the fraud without having participated in it. But in either case the passage is not rendered the more genuine.

Thus much for the famous or rather *infamous* passage in Josephus, which was clung to, like a drowning man clinging to a straw, till the common people got their eyes sufficiently open to see the fraud that had been practised upon them. The other extract from the unpublished lecture is the following:

Having disposed of Mr. Leslie's "Short and Easy Method with Deists," in a way which, I trust, will prove

satisfactory to the individual who directed my attention to that work: I shall now proceed to the consideration of the *third* proposition, which, as I stated in the outset of these lectures, would found the groundwork, or basis, of this enquiry—namely—

What evidence does the New Testament itself afford as to the existence of Jesus Christ, and the truth of the narrative which it contains respecting him?

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Hitherto our attention has been directed to what may be regarded as the *external* evidence merely of the truth of christianity. The question now to be discussed brings us to what is called the *internal* evidence.

And here I would remark, that although the *contents* of no book whatever can be admitted as evidence of the truth of the events which it relates, unless those events are *probable*, and are corroborated by other unexceptionable testimony; yet, if it can be shown, by an examination of the book itself, that it contains statements of a *contradictory* nature; and, more especially, asserts as facts what are well known to be in *opposition* to history, it must then be laid aside as a work of fiction, by which nothing true can be established.

That the New Testament narrates, *as facts*, what is proved by authentic history to be *unfounded*, is what I now mean to show from its contents.

In the 23d chapter of Matthew, ver. 35, Jesus is made to say to his brethren, the Jews, “that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of *Zecharias, the son of Barachias*, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.”

Now, on looking over the Old Testament, and the historical works of Josephus, we find no such event recorded *previous* to the time when this curse was pronounced by Jesus. But in the account given by Josephus of the siege of Jerusalem, (b. 4, c. 9,) it is stated, that *this very Zecharias*, the son of Barachias, was murdered in the temple by the faction of Judas, called the zealots.

This shows evidently, that the gospel of Matthew was not in existence until *after* the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; that is, seventy years at least *subsequent* to the birth of Christ, and at least thirty-seven years after these words must have been spoken by Jesus, if thus spoken at all.

From this it is manifest, that the supposed Jesus, who is said to have been executed in the reign of Tiberius, is a fictitious person, and that the words attributed to him in the passage just cited from Matthew, refer to a period nearly forty years *posterior* to the assumed date of his supposed crucifixion.

The supposed *prediction* of the fall of Jerusalem, contained in the sequel of the same chapter, and in the following, is thus reduced to a *historical* narrative: "or, at least, coincides with the commencement of the siege, when it was easy to foresee the impending fate of Jerusalem, incapable of resisting the mighty power of Rome, especially at a time when the Jewish people were a prey to so many intestine feuds and fanatical parties."

The 18th chapter of Matthew furnishes another proof of the *late* date of the composition of this gospel, supposed to be the most ancient of the four.

At ver. 17, it is said, "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the *church*: but if he neglect to hear the *church*, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican."

This law is taken from the pentateuch, and the word *church* means congregation, and is substituted for synagogue, or council of the elders among the Jews.

But during the lifetime of Jesus, and for many years after his supposed death, the christians had no council that could be called a *church* having civil and religious jurisdiction over its members. [That is, on the ground that the gospel narrations are true.]

It is also unquestionable, that the primitive christians, such as Paul, continued to practice the ceremonies of *Judaism*, and that it was not till *long after* that they established separate communities for the decision of their own



matters, without applying, as they had been in the practice of doing, to the Roman tribunals.

The term *church*, therefore, in the passage alluded to, is an additional and strong proof of the gospel of Matthew having been written *long after* the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, and when the christians were regularly organized, and recognised a civil jurisdiction peculiar to their congregations.

Matthew's gospel makes Jesus to say, (c. 11, v. 12,) "And *from the days* of John the Baptist *until now*, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Here, again, is another proof that this gospel was not written until a late period. John and Jesus were contemporaries. The latter, therefore, could not say, in the early part of his ministry, "*from the days of John the Baptist until now.*"

Luke, the alleged writer of the gospel under that name, and of the Acts of the Apostles, is supposed to have been a physician in Antioch. He addresses his book to Theophilus, who was a bishop in Antioch about the middle of the second century. Dr. Lardner says, about the year 168. Theophilus was a convert from the heathen world, and Luke thus addresses him: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which, from the beginning, were eye witnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed."

From this statement it is obvious, that many others had written gospels before Luke undertook his history. But instead of his respecting either that of Matthew, Mark, or John, he is evidently dissatisfied with their imperfections, and sets about writing what he considers a better gospel than any that had appeared before him. He either knows not, or disregards Matthew's genealogy of Jesus. He is

the only one who gives us any dates. But for his gospel, we should not know whether Jesus lived one, or one hundred years, excepting what Matthew has said about the slaying of the infants, and the flight to Egypt. Had Luke known that Matthew was a real disciple of Jesus, and that he had written a gospel, he could not have failed to have noticed him and his gospel as a guide. But, so far from this, he says that he has known the whole matter *from the beginning*, and seems to hint, that no one could know more of it than himself—which was likely to be true, if we allow that he began to write his gospel about the year 150.

In Luke 2d, ver. 2, it is said, “And this taxing was first made when *Cyreneus* was governor.” It is proved from history that Cyreneus could not have been governor till many years after the time this taxing is said to have taken place.

In the “Acts of the Apostles,” c. 5, v. 36, we read of the rising of one Theudas, and a speech made, in consequence, by Gamaliel. By Josephus, this affair appears to have happened at least *ten years after* the period assigned to it by the writer of the Acts.

We are led to believe, from different parts of the gospels, particularly in the account of two thousand hogs having been compelled to form a union with a legion of devils, which proved their destruction, that the Jews were extensive dealers in pork, and actually fed great herds of swine for their own, and their neighbour’s consumption.

Now, the fact is, that not only the Jews, but the whole inhabitants of that part of Asia, have abstained from the use of pork from time immemorial. It is, therefore, utterly improbable, that any individual would keep a herd of swine in that neighbourhood, and a strong proof that neither of the gospels which mention this circumstance, or the prodigal’s son feeding swine, were written in Asia, nor by a native of Asia.

Throughout the whole of the *epistles*, there is no allusion to any particular known gospel, nor to any emperor or person in authority at the time when they were written.

At the conclusion of the Epistle to the Romans, we, indeed, find a piece of direct evidence *against* christianity. The 25th and 26th verses are as follows: "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, *according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began*, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God *only wise*, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever, amen."

I will connect with these verses the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th, of the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: *which is not another*; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed*. As we said before, so say I now again, if any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is *not after man*. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Here is Paul, admitting, after having preached a considerable number of years, *that he knows nothing true of Jesus Christ, but that which Jesus Christ had revealed to himself*; and expressly declaring that this revelation had been a mystery kept secret since the world began, and was only then *first preached by himself*.

This declaration, were there nothing else, would be sufficient to destroy all idea of the four gospels being authentic.

The fact of the New Testament having been written

in *Greek*, clearly corroborates what I have been contending for. Had it been of Jewish origin, had Jesus been a Jew, and all his disciples Jews ; had Paul been a Jew, as stated in these writings ; is it not reasonable to suppose that the gospels and epistles would have been written in the *Hebrew* language, or rather Syro-Chaldaic, the language spoken in Judea at the time ? The circumstance of their having been written in a barbarous Greek, or in a mixture of Greek and Asiatic, shows that the writers were illiterate persons ; and instead of proving that they were the work of the *first* century, or *before* the destruction of Jerusalem, plainly proves that they were the work of an after period, when the Hebrew ceased to be a national language by the utter dispersion of the Jews.

END OF THE LECTURES.

## APPENDIX.

[I SHALL here add a note by way of *appendix*, as I find I have room without exceeding my present limits. This, together with the extract from Wytttenbach, and what will follow, must be accepted in lieu of the *eighth lecture*, as the work has already exceeded the limits I at first proposed, and cannot be extended without enhancing the price. Should this work meet with sufficient encouragement, and life and health being spared, I shall bring out another soon, *on the supposed existence of God, distinct from matter, or any God possessing moral attributes, and the probable eternity of the universe*, showing that there is no evidence in favor of the former proposition, and no existing proof against the probable truth of the latter, and that probability is all that can be alleged (as nothing can be affirmed) on either side.]

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Note A. See page 92.

"The first publication of any part of the annals of Tacitus," says Mr. Taylor, in his *DIEGESIS*, p. 393, "was by Johannes de Spire, at Venice, in the year 1468. His imprint being made from a single manuscript, in his own power and possession only, and purporting to have been written in the eighth century. From this manuscript, which none but the most learned would know of, none but the most curious would investigate, and none but the most interested would transcribe, or be allowed to transcribe; and that too, in an age and country, when and where, to have suggested but a doubt against the authenticity of any document which the authorities had once chosen to adopt as evidence of christianity, would have subjected the conscientious sceptic to the faggot; from *this*, all other manuscripts and printed copies of the works of Tacitus are derived: and consequently in the forty-fourth section of the fifteenth book of these annals, we have the celebrated passage."

On p. 395, he says, "This passage, which would have served the purpose of christian quotation, better than any other in all the writings of Tacitus, or of any pagan writer whatever, is not quoted by any of the christian fathers."

On p. 396, he says, "There is no vestige or trace of its existence any where in the world, before the fifteenth century." These, among other cogent reasons, he gives, in all *twenty*, why he considers "this celebrated passage to be a forgery or interpolation upon the text of Tacitus."

Respecting the letter of Pliny the younger, Mr. Taylor says, Diegesis, p. 404, "I leave the reader to give what consideration he may to the objections to the claims of this epistle, which I subjoin without the advantage of the lights Dr. Semler may have cast on the subject.

1. "The undeniable fact, that the first christians were the greatest liars and forgers that had ever been in the whole world, and that they actually stopt at nothing.

2. "The undeniable fact, that it was not the ignorant and vulgar among them, but their best scholars, the shrewdest, cleverest, and highest in rank and talent, who were the practitioners of these forgeries.

3. "The flagrant atopism of christians, being found in the remote province of Bythinia, before they had acquired any notoriety in Rome.

4. "The inconsistency of religious persecution, with the just and philosophic character of the Roman government.

5. "The inconsistency of the supposition that so just and moral a people as the primitive christians are assumed to have been, should have been the first to provoke the Roman government to depart from its universal maxims of toleration, liberality, and indifference.

6. "The inconsistency of such conduct with the humane and dignified character of Pliny.

7. "The use of torture, to extort confession; torturing and tormenting being peculiarly and characteristically christian.

8. "The choice of women to be the subjects of this torture; when the ill usage of women was, in like manner, abhorrent to the Roman character, and peculiarly and characteristically christian.

9. "The repetition of this letter in the one ascribed to Tiberianus, being precisely such a repetition as we find of the famous forgery of Josephus, in the Persic History of Christ, by Jeremy Xavier. A forgery having once been successful, it should seem, the christians must needs ply it again. So here is a second throw at the same game.

"Tiberianus, governor of Syria, to the Emperor Trajan.

"I am quite tired with punishing and destroying the Galilæans, or those of the sect called christians, according to your orders; yet they never cease to profess voluntarily what they are, and to offer themselves to death. Wherefore, I have labored by exhortations and threats, to discourage them from daring to confess to me that they are of that sect. Yet, in spite of all persecution, they continue still to do it. Be pleased, therefore, to let me know what your highness thinks proper to be done with them." *Cotelr. Patr. Apostol.* vol. 2. p. 181; *Middleton citant*, p. 201.

"No rational man will doubt the forgery of this pretended epistle, which

though thrown earlier in time, is a palpable repetition of the good hit that had been made in the epistle, ascribed to Pliny.

"I have no doubt at all of the forgery of the passage of Tacitus. But if the objections which I have stated, or any other, be really fatal to this of Pliny, I would recommend my reverend opponents, and all other assertors that the historical evidences of christianity are unassailable to \* \* \* \* \* revile, defame, and injure their opponents as much as they possibly can; to represent them as miserably ignorant, as desperately wicked, as fools, liars, madmen, and idiots; but above all, to treat both them and their writings, with the most sovereign contempt.—'Tis the best they can make of their bad bargain."

This information respecting Tacitus and Pliny, was received since these lectures were delivered.

#### THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

[From the Correspondent, vol. v. p. 81.]

Professor Stuart's arguments in favor of the authenticity of the epistle to the Hebrews, as ascribed to St. Paul. From vol. 1. of a commentary on that epistle, by Professor Moses Stuart, of Andover.

*Pantœnus*, who flourished about A. D. 180, and was principal of the christian school of Alexandria, is the first writer who speaks of this epistle as being Paul's.

*Reply.* Nothing of *Pantœnus* remains, but a fragment in the ecclesiastical history of Eusebius, lib. vi. ch. 14: what we have, is at second-hand only. Of the authority of Eusebius we shall treat by and by.

Secondly, *Pantœnus* died 213, so that the time when he wrote or flourished, should be rather 200 than 180 of our era.

Hence, the very earliest testimony of St. Paul being the author of an anonymous letter or pamphlet, is the second-hand assertion of a man who lived at least 180 [or rather 150] years after the pamphlet in question was written, even if it were written in the time of St. Paul. King Charles was beheaded exactly 180 years ago: suppose an anonymous letter published at that time, should now for the first time be ascribed by a modern author to White-

lock or any other person of that day, without any reason assigned or any farther corroborating proof; would that be sufficient authority for believing Whitelock to be the author of it? Should we not ask for the reasons why the modern writer ascribed it to Whitelock, that we also might judge of them?

*Clemens of Alexandria*, according to Eusebius, is of the same opinion with his predecessor Pantœnus.

*Reply.* How did either of them know the author, at the distance of 180 or 200 years; [or even 120, allowing 60 years before Paul wrote?] for they have not told us their reasons, nor has Eusebius for them.

*Origen*, who died aged 69, A. D. 254, inclines to think that it is written by St. Paul. Professor Stuart, who removes dates as far back as he dares, gives us A. D. 220 for Origen.

*Reply.* This passage is also preserved by Eusebius.

Secondly. In Origen's time, the authenticity of that epistle was doubted, as appears by Professor Stuart's citation of Origen's words. From its being in a stile unlike to St. Paul's, and from its being commonly ascribed either to Luke, or to Clemens Romanus.

*Justin Martyr*, about A. D. 140, alludes manifestly to this epistle as an authoritative book.

*Reply.* Justin Martyr does not assert directly or indirectly that St. Paul wrote this epistle. The epistle may have been authoritative in the church: but this indirect and supposed allusion by a writer who died A. D. 163, is no authority whatever to prove the presumed authenticity of an anonymous letter. We want reasons and proofs. Besides, any man who has really perused the writings of Justin Martyr, will not give him credit for any thing like talent or judgment, and hardly for common sense.

*Methodius of Olympus in Lycia*, A. D. 290, ascribes this epistle to St. Paul.

*Reply.* What then? Does the evidence grow stronger in proportion as it is distant from the time in question?

So does *Pamphilus of Casarea*, A. D. 294.

*Reply.* What then? So does Professor Stuart in 1828.



Is a naked authority 300 years after a fact, sufficient of itself to prove it ?

Oh ! but Eusebius, the great Eusebius, about A. D. 315, (Eusebius died 340) ascribes this epistle to St. Paul.

I will not burthen these brief remarks, with the proofs of the shameful partiality of Eusebius as an historian, complained of by Baronius and Tillemont; nor of his infamous accusation of Athanasius, showing an utter disregard of all truth, honor, and honesty, when he wished to crush an adversary ; nor of his conforming to pagan ceremonies through fear ; nor of his shameful, slavish exaltation of Constantine into a saint ; nor of his false assertions as to the number of martyrs, in direct contradiction to Origen ; nor of the infamous subserviency of the whole of his history to the support of the orthodox opinions of his day—if Professor Stuart denies these accusations, he denies what he knows or ought to know to be true : but he dare not deny them : any more than he dare deny the fraudulent *Economia* of Origen, or the careless mistranslations of Jerom, or the similar frauds of Chrysostom and others.

I say, that Eusebius is not worthy of the least credit as an historian. I say that he not only practises, but unblushingly professes to forge, to falsify, to lie for the good of the holy cause : that he defends, and justifies these shameful practices : and that he is liable to the very probable suspicion of having forged the passages on which Professor Stuart so much relies, for the express purpose of establishing the authenticity of a previous forgery.

Will Professor Stuart have the goodness to look at the title of the thirty-first chapter of the twelfth book of the *Evangelical preparation*, of Eusebius, and read these words :—

“How it may be lawful and fitting to use falsehood as a medicine, and for the benefit of those who want to be deceived.” In this chapter, as Gibbon has already observed before me, he adduces a passage of Plato, which approves the occasional practice of pious and salutary frauds : nor is Eusebius ashamed of justifying the senti-

ments of the Athenian philosopher, by the example of the sacred writers of the Old Testament. Indeed, why not? *sing tantarara, rogues all, &c.*

I do not care one cent about the authenticity of the epistle to the Hebrews, and therefore I do not dwell on the admissions of Professor Stuart against that authenticity, from Irenæus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Novatus, and Jerom; all showing that the question rests only upon orthodox conjecture on one side, and tradition on the other, without one particle of proof on either. It is a question of no moment; *de Lara caprina*. But it is of moment to the public to see upon what infamous authorities modern orthodoxy is willing to rest its cause. What dreadful rogues are converted into saints, to suit their pious purposes. No honest man can quote Eusebius as good authority, without forfeiting his own claim to common sense or veracity. I am sorry Professor Stuart's zeal has so blinded him.

One word more to the professor. "I have not seen the third edition of your Hebrew grammar, nor do I know whether my present objection be removed. But when you published two editions of what you are pleased to call *your* Hebrew grammar, did you not shamefully appropriate to yourself, without reference or acknowledgment, the labors of another man?"

"Is not your pretended Hebrew grammar, in substance and in fact, page upon page, not *your* grammar, but the grammar of Gesenius? I say, that it cannot properly be called yours, and that it may properly be called his; you are a translator, not a composer; you conceal your originals; you have not done Gesenius the justice of one word of reference, citation, or acknowledgment, even where you copy his mistakes, as in the declensions. Is this honest? This may be *Andover ethics*; I hope you have taken out a patent right for this practice, and mean to confine it to yourself." So much for Professor Moses Stuart.

My reason for troubling myself, or you, Mr. Editor, about this silly question of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is, to show what mere "knights of the post," these orthodox

gentlemen rely on to keep on its last legs a gainful imposture, and to bolster up a dying cause. I wish your readers would read Dr. Middleton's account of the miracles of the four first centuries of the christian church, and the question will be set at rest. The fathers of the church, in point of learning, common sense, veracity, fidelity, accuracy, are, as a class of writers, absolutely beneath criticism. No honest man can read them without a perfect conviction of their being either fools, or knaves, or both : and I challenge Professor Stuart to contradict me. However, I do not want to have any thing more to do with or to say to that gentlemen or his friend Eusebius *par nobile ! requiescant in pace !* unless the professor should choose to call me out.

PHILO VERITAS.

NOTE.—My edition of the Evangelical Preparation of Eusebius, is by Francis Viger a Soc. Jesu, Presbyter. Paris, 1628. The passage cited is in page 607.

*Extracts from Letters addressed to the Editor of the National Gazette, Philadelphia.*

SIR—Your paper contains such frequent panegyrics on the christian religion, its divine origin, its absolute necessity to society and government, and so many vituperations against infidels, and their writings, that it is no wonder you are in high favor with the parsons, and all the orthodox old women (male and female) of your city. You seem to place yourself at the head of the light armed troops, the guerilla warfare against heresy and infidelity. Your paragraphs exhibit your zeal, if not your prowess ; and show your adherence to the holy alliance between church and state, and your pious hatred to all its opponents. I will not do you injustice by attributing all this exhibition of zeal without knowledge to popularity hunting—to the success of your paper requiring this stage play. I will not do this, suspicious as appearances may be ; because, from what I have heard of your character, I am disposed to consider you as a well meaning and honest

man ; better fitted, indeed, for skirmishing in paragraphs, than for any serious discussion requiring learned or laborious research; but sincerely expressing your real convictions. It is in this last and respectable character that I have taken the liberty of addressing you, and request that you would save, if you can, your favorite Bible, from the disgraceful charges that now, for the hundredth time, have been brought against it, without the semblance of a reply or an apology, from its innumerable host of salaried advocates. In good truth, these Swiss troops who fight for pay, are not to be relied upon in time of danger. *Non defensoribus istis, tempus egit.* The spirit truly is willing, but the head is weak. You will absolve us, however, from any impropriety in defending ourselves against your orthodox accusations, even though we should carry the war into the enemy's quarters.

In your paper of Thursday, April 10th, 1828, I find an extract from a letter of some priest or other, more weak than wise, who signs himself X. ; and which your good wishes to the good cause, has induced you to adopt and insert. It commences thus : "*No nation will be either prosperous or happy which conforms not its laws to the spirit of that system of MORAL PRECEPTS which the God of nature gave to the Jews, and which pervades with exquisite harmony the whole of the Old and New Testament.*"

Now, sir, as your orthodox correspondent has written, and you in your wisdom have adopted this pious passage, you will not, I hope, complain, if those who dissent from your opinion should take the liberty of examining it, as I shall do. These vague and sweeping assertions, by men who are paid for making them, and who live by the imposture they profess, can derive no support from authority ; the question, then, is, as to the *moral precepts* which, with such exquisite harmony, pervade these books. How can we ascertain them but by referring to the books themselves ? I have done so, with the aid of the second volume of the *Correspondent*, p. 269, as the ground-work of the three first letters which I propose to address you, viz.

1. Proofs of the filthiness and obscenity that pervade the Old Testament.

2. Proofs of the cruelty, the revengeful spirit, the fraud, robbery, and falsehood, imputed in that book to God himself, and to his avowed favorites, by precept, by example, or both.

I grant all this has been repeatedly and abundantly shown; but the hired advocates of christianity suppress, and never notice the objections so strongly and repeatedly made to it. They treat it as if it stood like the axioms of mathematics, perfectly free from all possible objection! This is not very fair conduct; but it is consistent with the fraudulent cunning of the whole class of christian teachers. Hence, we have again and again to hold up, in strong characters, before the eyes of these blind leaders of the blind, the objections which they are determined not to see. Here, then, thou pious editor, and thou pious assessor of silly falsehoods, the Rev. Mr. X., whoever you may be, here; look at this black catalogue; reply to it if ye can; and prepare yourselves for the two next specimens of scripture morality, which I mean to offer for your consideration. In the mean time, I thank ye for the opportunity ye have afforded of bringing forward this infidel defence; for surely, if we are attacked, we have a right not merely to defend, but to recriminate. In future, it will be our duty to defend ourselves by carrying the war into the enemy's quarters.

#### SPECIMENS OF FILTHINESS AND OBSCENITY.

The story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. Genesis xvi. 1—16.

The account of Lot and his guests at Sodom. xix. 1—18.

The amours of Lot's daughters with their father. xix. 30—38.

The bargains of Rachel and Leah. xxx. 1—35.

Catamenia. xxxi. 35.

The ravishing of Dinah, &c. &c. xxxiv. 1—31.

Reuben and Bilhan. xxxv. 22.

- Onan, Judah, and Tamar. xxxviii. 8—30.  
 Potiphar's wife and Joseph. xxxix. 7—18.  
 Cases of uncleanness described. Leviticus xv. 15—33.  
 Prohibition of sexual intercourse. xviii. 1—30.  
 Bestiality. xx. 1—27.  
 Whoredom of the Israelites. Numbers xxv. 1—8.  
 Female captives; cruelty towards them. xxxi. 17—35.  
 Tokens of virginity. Deuteronomy xxii. 13—30.  
 Assault by a woman. xxv. 11.  
 Circumcision. Joshua v. 1—8.  
 Sodomy and lust. Judges xix. 22—29.  
 Ravishment. xxi. 1—25.  
 Adultery and murder; Abigail and Nabal. 1 Samuel  
 xxv. 1—44.  
 David, Bathsheba, and Uriah. 2 Sam. xi.  
 Amnon and Tamar. xiii. 10—15.  
 Absalom with David's concubines. xvi. 22.  
 Solomon's 700 wives and 300 concubines. 1 Kings xi. 3.  
 Him that pisseth against a wall. 2 Kings ix. 8.  
 Grind unto another. Job xxxi. 9, 10.  
 The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. i. to viii.  
 throughout.  
 Immodesty. Isaiah iii. 17. xlvii. 1—3.  
 Nastiness. Ezekiel iv. 13, &c.  
 The same—very bad. xvi. throughout.  
 The same. xxii. throughout.  
 The same—very bad. xxiii. throughout.  
 The same. Hosea i. 1—6.  
 The same. iii. 1—3.

There might be some additions to this horrible list; but here is quite enough to show the character of these books, which a lying and fraudulent priesthood have the daring impudence to ascribe *verbatim et literatim*, to the immediate dictation and inspiration of the Deity! No instance of blasphemy can be adduced equal to this. No specimens of language too filthy for the most vulgar brothel, can be shown as employed in any other religion. The pagans were obscene; but this is beyond mere obscenity. No wonder that brothels for peduacity were built all around

the temple at Jerusalem, and that, (using the words of St. Jerom,) *pueris alienis adhœserunt*. Jerom on 2 Is. Bôxius de sig. Eccles. l. 7, ch. 4. Gaspar sanctius, ib. 4. 12. These Jewish practices were in "exquisite harmony" with the style of their own books.

I appeal to the Editor of the National Gazette—I appeal to his Rev. correspondent X.—I appeal to any decent and well meaning reader of these pages—I ask of them, and each of them—would you, for any inducement under heaven, read aloud the passages I have referred to, to your family? Would you dare to violate the chaste ears, or contaminate the virgin purity of mind of a young female, by reading to her these abominable expressions and descriptions? I solemnly declare, I should shudder to myself to copy at full length the citations to which I have in this letter obscurely referred. How, then, can the book which contains them, be honestly recommended as favorable to decency and morality? What are we to think of the class of teachers who solemnly proclaim the book which contains these detestable passages, to be the *word of God*! Aye, the *inspired* word of God! And who maintain themselves in comparative idleness and luxury, by maintaining the divine character of this strange collection!

There is hardly a family in the United States who does not possess a copy of the Bible. My assertions, therefore, concerning this book, and the passages referred to, can be verified or confuted at any moment. Deception is out of the question. To the Bible, therefore, I appeal; to the law and to the testimony. Let our adversaries do the same; and let us hear what defence they can make for facts impossible to be denied. Let those who will take the trouble of reading these passages, say, when they have done so, whether the epithets I have applied to them are not deserved. What inducement can a plain man like myself, who has no interest whatever to gratify in this question, but the interest of truth, of decency, and morality—what interest can such a man have to complain of the religion of his country without cause? What am I

to gain by it? Surely neither profit nor honor. You pay none of your contributors, and you know not who I am. Nor have I any ambition to be known; for so soon as I am known, so soon and so surely the rancorous hatred of an offended priesthood, with all the bad and merciless passions that avarice and ambition can stir up, will be employed to my injury; nor shall I have any protection but my own insignificance.

On the contrary, is not the interest of the clergy pledged to the truth of the falsehoods by which they subsist? Have they not a strong and manifest motive and interest to carry on the deception? Think of the tribute they raise on public credulity in this city of New-York alone.

The Roman Catholic church, well knowing in how many ways this Bible book is calculated to contaminate mental purity, forbids the indiscriminate use of it; and properly. But, disgusting as the task is, I cannot help thinking, that every mother should read these passages, that she may judge whether the book containing them is a proper book for her children to read.

I undertake to prove from the Bible, that the God of the Jews, adopted and enthroned as the God of the christians, is a being, unjust, and cruel beyond all records of human cruelty elsewhere to be found, vindictive, wavering, not knowing his own mind, deceitful, jealous, unforgiving, and eternally punishing the innocent for the crimes of the guilty. A being of passions most detestable and truly diabolical. And that his great and acknowledged agents and favorites have been the most execrable villains known in the records of human history.

To begin from the beginning. When he placed Adam and Eve in Paradise, he either knew they would eat of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, or he did not know it. If he did not, what becomes of his omniscience? If he did, was it not an act of wanton cruelty to tempt them deliberately to their destruction?

On account of the wickedness of the human race, he brought the deluge on the earth. Was there no milder method of reforming mankind, than that of extermina-



ting them. *Et ubi desertum faciunt*, (says the Goth, speaking of the Romans,) *pacem appellant*.

When God ordained the existence of the human race, their minds, their bodies, their faculties, their propensities, their dispositions, were derived from him : he framed and fashioned the human race after his own liking, and with such characters and tendencies as he chose. Why did he not give them better dispositions ? It rested with himself. Why punish them for the necessary results of his own management and ordination ? He might have made them angels ; why did he choose to make them devils, and then wonder and complain that they were so ? Did he take any pains to instruct them better ? to reform ? No : he knew the career of wickedness to which he had destined them ; he let them run it without any kind of interference on his part, and then exterminated the whole race, for actions due to himself and the dispositions he had implanted !

But suppose, for a moment, that the men deserved punishment, why kill the poor ignorant women and children ? what had they done ? Why drown the sheep, the oxen, the beasts, the birds, the insects ? what had they done ? *Quid meruistis oves, placidum pecus, inque legendos nati homines ? Quid meruere Boves ?* Tell me, Mr. Walsh, where can you find, out of this book, any thing more diabolical than this savage, indiscriminate cruelty, that overwhelmed, with cool deliberation, in one vast and universal destruction, the innocent and the guilty ? Can this be considered as answering the great end of all punishment, reformation ? This is what your worthy correspondent, I suppose, will call gospel morality ; divine justice ; wholesome example ! No wonder the priesthood are cruel by profession. What a pity it is you are not a priest ! Not even an abbe, or an ex-jesuit ! Come out boldly : lay aside your rancorous and skulking paragraphs, and defend this deluge if you dare. Who has yet replied to Voltaire's poem on the earthquake at Lisbon ? You may perhaps term all this ungentlemanly abuse. Cease then your sneers at infidelity, your pious denunciations of heterodoxy, your wish for Paine's works to be

consigned to the flames. Had you not better *reply* to them first ?

Before that sentence is decreed 'em,  
Do read 'em, Mr. Boreum, read 'em.

Show us your patent right for exclusive abuse and scurrility, in which you and the orthodox are so delighted to deal : else do not complain of the maxim, *par pari referto* ; or that we sometimes condescend to take the advice of that wise man of 700 wives and 300 concubines, and answer a fool according to his folly. If you have any thing like argument, out with it, let us have it, and we will then deal in argument alone.

Examine attentively the following passages. Exod. xii. 35, 36. Deut. xx. 16. vii. 2. xii. 6, 15, 17. Gen. vxii. 14. Exod. xii. Josh. vii. x. xx. Judges iii. 15. 1. Sam. xv. xvi. Psal. cix. cxxxvii. 2 Sam. xxi. 1. xxiv. 1. 2 Chron. xviii. 21.

### *Of the Old Testament Attributes of the Deity.*

Read the following passages at length. Deut. xx. 23. xxii. 20, 24, 28, 29. Deut i. 34. Ps. xcv. 2. Heb. iii. 11. Nahum i. 2, &c. Ezek. xxxviii. 18, 19. xx. 25, 21. Gen. vi. 6. See also the whole of chap. xiv. of Jeremiah. Ex. xxxi. 17. Judges ix. 13. Is. v. 56. xvii. 18. Zech. x. 8, Ex. xxxiii. 2. xxiv. 10, 11. xxxiii. 20, 23. Gen. xi. 4. 6, 7. i. 26. Numb. iii. 11, 12, 14, 41. Levit. xxvii. Deut. xxxvii. 42. vii. 2. xxii. 29.

So much for the moral precepts and moral practices of the God of the Old Testament. I will not dwell on the moral precepts and practices of those pious personages his favorites, the patriarchs and prophets ; it would lead me too far. Those who read their Bible with attention will have a tolerably just idea of them. Let Mr. Walsh and his parson find me, if they can, more reprehensible characters than Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, David, Solomon, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, &c.

The morality of the New Testament has been greatly vaunted, without much reason, as we shall see.

The *morality* of the Gospel is very objectionable, as

appears in the actions and doctrines of Jesus and his Apostles.

Instances of harsh language toward parents and relations: Matt. xix. 29. Mark iii. 32. x. 29. Luke viii. 19. xiv. 26. John ii. 3. Matt. viii. 21, 22. Luke ix. 61.

Instances of gross and vulgar abuse of the Pharisees and others, the prevailing and literary sect of the Jews; calculated to excite the hatred and violence of the common people against them, in cases where reason and argument were called for, and where Jesus was clearly in the wrong. Matt. xvi. 1, 4. xxiii. the whole chapter. Mark xii. 38, 40. Luke xi. 37, to the end. John viii. 44.

Instances of violent assault, and breach of the peace, Matt. xxi. 12. Luke xix. 45.

Instances of his attempts to form a party among the populace. Matt. xxi. 9. &c. Mark xi. 10, &c. Luke xix. 38, &c.

Instance of his abuse of riches, and of rich men. Matt. v. 4. xix. 23, 24. Mark xii. 44. x. 21. Luke xvi, throughout, xviii. 22. Matt. xxvi. 10.

Instance, of prevarication. John vii. 8.

Instances of his making free with other people's property. Matt. x. 9, &c. Luke x. 4. ix. 1. vii. 26. xix. 30.

Instances of very doubtful and unintelligible morality. Luke xvi. Matt. xxv. 14. Matt. xxii. Mark ix. 43. Matt. viii. 22. Luke ix. 60, &c. Matt. vi. 31. Luke xii. 16, &c. Luke xiii. 1—4. vii. 37. x. 40. Mark x. 21. Matt. xiii. 12—14. xx. 1, &c. John viii. 1, &c.

*Unintelligible doctrines*, inculcated as matters of faith, necessary to be believed, John vi. 52, et seq. Nonresistance of injuries, and loving your enemies: the perpetual denunciation of riches, frugality, and forethought; and the hatred inculcated against rich people, as in the parable of Dives, Matt. vi. 34. Luke vi. 20—30. xii. 16. xvi. 19—31.

*The preaching* of superstitious and ignorant opinions: as the doctrine of demoniacal possessions; the cure of epilepsies, by the fasting and prayer of the prescriber; the frequency of evil spirits intermingling in human affairs, of which more hereafter.

*His utter neglect* of his mother and his relations, so far as appears through the whole course of his life.

*Precepts in hostility* with the rules of common life. Luke vi. 35. Matt. v. 40. Luke vi. 20—34. xi. 25. xii. 33. Romans xii. 20.

*The precepts in praise of poverty.* Luke vi. 21—25. Matt. vi. 25—34.

These doctrines evidently tend to the practice so diligently followed by the Apostles and their successors, and all the reverend divines of every sect, and every country, of living at ease upon the industry and credulity of others. But they are manifestly inconsistent with that conduct which is absolutely necessary to individual comfort, to domestic duties, and to national prosperity. His morality and benevolence was bigoted and confined; I appeal to the whole of the 17th chapter of John, compared with the first general epistle of John. He declares that he prays not, he cares not for the world, but only for his particular disciples. Add his suggestion in favor of voluntary castration, and against marriage. Mat xix. 12.

[I here omit much for the want of room.]

Such are the remarks on the Gospel Morality, which the silly panegyrics of Mr. Walsh and his clerical friend have induced me to arrange, and which they may refute, if they are able. I submit them to the consideration of your readers, and of every sincerely honest man in the community. The true precepts of morality, deduced from the relations of man toward man, as a social animal—based on the broad foundations of equal and general utility, are the affairs of every man in society. The great precepts of morality, by which society is to be governed, and which alone it is the duty of society to sanction, are plain, true, and useful: founded alone on our duty to our neighbor, and his duty to his neighbor. Precepts which have nothing to do with religion, nor religion with them. Those rules of social conduct, which are best calculated to produce the greatest good of the greatest number, constitute the only true MORAL CODE. Morality is the code of laws best fitted for our existence here, where we live in

society with each other, and obligatory only because they are in fact best fitted to promote the mutual happiness, on equal terms, of the members of society. Our social compact extends through this life only ; we make no contract about another. Religion embraces the views of our existence in another state after death ; it is founded on selfish wishes and expectations ; on hopes, at best very dubious ; and on our fears of offending a being whom the christian scriptures depict as a proud, selfish, cruel, inexorable, jealous, wavering tyrant, punishing where it is impossible for him to be injured, and furious against the poor and weak creatures whom he has, for his own good pleasure, condemned to crawl, for a certain time, on the surface of this earth ; why we were created 'tis hard to say ; for the facts that occur, seem plainly to indicate the presence of a careless, wanton, and cruel being, as the governor of the universe, if any governor, separate from the universe itself, there be, or by possibility can be. So prevalent is vice and misery over goodness and happiness, and so manifestly is it our duty to wage eternal war with the natural propensities which are made to form a part of, and essentially belong to the animal man !

In submitting these remarks, it is manifest that I can possibly have no motive but to present just views, and to elicit truth. I can have no prospect of gain or advantage by them. The falsehoods propagated by the adversaries of my opinions, are those by which they are maintained in luxury and ease ; by which they acquire and maintain weight and importance in society ; by which they exhibit practically and triumphantly, that bigotry is the high road to respect and influence, that it is the duty of religious zeal to be intolerant, and that godliness in all its forms is great gain.

TRUTH.

[NOTE.—The above extracts are taken from letters published in the Correspondent, vols. 3 and 4. A different character of God can be shown from some parts of the Bible, but this only proves that the scriptures contradict themselves. These statements are true, whatever is true besides.]

## APPENDIX TO THE THIRD EDITION.

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THE following 12 pages are added as a second *appendix* to the Review of the Evidences of Christianity, &c. which work has now been before the public two years, during which time two editions have been sold, of 500 copies each, and no attempt has been made, to my knowledge, either to answer its objections, or to prove its reasoning false ; or even to point out a single error, as to matters of fact, in any of the statements and references herein contained.

The following letters addressed to the Editor of the Trumpet, which were published, with several others, in the Boston Investigator, will show that I have not been backward in avowing my opinions, however erroneous they may be supposed to be, in order, if possible, to induce the clergy to undertake to enlighten my darkness, and give me and others good grounds, if they can, for more rational views of the subject.

The public will not long be satisfied, when the question is asked, " why is not this work answered if it be not true ? " To be put off with the answer, " It is unworthy of the notice of the clergy ; " or with that equally cant saying, " There is nothing to answer." There is *much* to answer. The truth of all their dogmas which relate to God, to heaven, to hell, and to a future state of existence for man, in their sense of speaking, is called in question. The whole is treated as an idle chimera. Out of the multiplicity of opinions, taught for solemn truth, in relation to supernatural operations, as well as to unseen beings and an unknown world, beyond the present life, after eighteen hundred years' preaching, the clergy are unable to prove any thing true for man beyond the grave. They are unable to prove the existence of what is called God, on which all other theological opinions depend. Hence the presumption is, that all those opinions are false. For the rule in law is, and should be applied in all controversies, *affirmantes est probare* ; and if we adopt the law maxim, *de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*, the matter is settled ; for then, " we must apply the same conclusion to things that do not exist, and to things of whose existence there is no evidence." *Cooper on Libel*, p. 90.

Sceptics have nothing to *prove*, but every thing to *discover* ; hence they are very properly called Free Enquirers. And he who affirms a proposition, as being worthy of belief, and which he thinks all ought to believe, before he can demand the belief, or even the assent of another, it is incumbent on him to prove the proposition true. Let him do this, and there will be no occasion to demand belief, or point it out as a duty, because belief will follow the proof as a natural consequence. Hence whenever the dogmas peculiar to theology, or christianity, are demonstrated, or even proved, I am ready to believe them ; but until they are so, it is my privilege to deny them, and I do deny them in toto. Neither am I alone in these sentiments ; many avow them openly ; but where there is one

thus bold and fearlessly independent, there are many, perhaps hundreds, who hold these views in secret. But only let it be generally known that a man may express his honest sentiments with impunity, without being despised therefor, except by those by whom it is an honor to be despised, and nine tenths of the whole community would at once discard all idea of supernaturals, unorganized beings, sense without organs, or intelligence without sense ; and whoever should attempt to preach such things for truth, would be as much despised and ridiculed, even by children, as the bodzes (or priests) are on the island of Loo Choo.

For the three first letters addressed to the Editor of the *Trumpet*, the reader is referred to the *Boston Investigator*, Vol. I. Nos. 17, 18, and 19, which are omitted here for the want of room.



#### LETTER IV.

*To the Editor of the "Trumpet."*

IN my last I proposed some additional queries in order to arrive, if possible, at some correct principles on which human society should be formed, so as to produce the greatest quantum of human happiness ; and come to the conclusion that it should be on the principle of perfect equality as to rights and privileges, totally regardless of sex ; and I will now go one step further, and say, totally regardless of color. I would recommend, of course, to give up the torrid zone to the colored people, as they can best endure a vertical sun. Yet if white people are disposed to live with colored, or colored with white, that is no reason why either should be enslaved, or that all should not enjoy equal privileges. What ! to marry each other ? Yes, to marry, if they love or fancy each other. There is no law against it, that I know of ; and there should be none. It is not what I should recommend or fancy myself ; but that is no reason why I should wish to take away the right or privilege of another. It is the RIGHT for which I am contending, and not the expediency, much less the propriety.

We have now, perhaps, sufficiently matured the subject, so as to be prepared to propose and answer the question, "*What laws would you have in relation to matrimony ?*" To which I answer.—Marriage is a civil contract between the parties, which stands upon the same basis of all other civil contracts, which are binding as long as the parties mutually agree, and no longer. The parties who make the contract, can dissolve it at pleasure, or by mutual consent. But if the parties cannot agree to separate by mutual consent, then it is necessary to call in a third party, one or more, as referees or arbitrators, not to bind the parties together ; for in relation to matrimony, where the ties of affection do not bind them, this is impossible ; but to say on what terms they shall separate, in regard not only to the property, but also to the maintenance and education of the children, if there be any ; which, the parties being satisfied therewith, may and ought to be final ; but should either or both of the parties be dissatisfied, then it may be carried to the court on the complaint of either party, and followed up to a final judgment or decision.

It may be said that this process would be attended with much expense. True. But knowing this to be the right and privilege of either party, not one out of a hundred would ever wish to separate at all ; for they would be fearful that they should not be able to do so well again ; and ninety-nine out of a hundred of those who did separate, would either separate by mutual consent (which would be the most likely) or else they would abide by the judgment of the referees, the expense of which would be but little, and nine times out of ten nothing.

The marriage, therefore, however consummated, during the continuance of the covenant, should be considered as sacred as it is now, and would be preserved with much more faithfulness. The laws against adultery, bigamy, or polygamy, I find no fault with. The laws against seduction, or the violation of female chastity, cannot be made too severe. The only principle I object to in the present laws is the compelling people to live together, in a state of legal prostitution, as it were, when they are no longer married on the principles of sincere love and affection. I would have no one, therefore, marry for life, in the first instance, nor for any certain period of time ; but only as long as the marriage answers the object intended, namely, as long as it promotes the mutual happiness of the parties immediately concerned ; and until dissolved as above stated. And knowing that there was no other bond between them, but the bond of affection, the parties would naturally maintain greater faithfulness and fidelity towards each other than they do at present. Now, you must be able to *prove* incontinence or some other high crime, before you can obtain a separation. Then, it would be sufficient to *suspect* it ; and therefore each party would take good care to give no just cause for suspicion. So far as the public is concerned, therefore, nothing more is necessary than that, when a marriage is consummated, it should be publicly known. It should hence be reported to the proper authority, a public record kept of it, and the fact published to the world in one or more public papers. And *vice versa*, when a marriage is dissolved, the same steps should be taken. This is all that concerns the public, so far as it regards the husband, or the wife, or the parents of children. But in regard to the maintenance and education of children, the people of the state or commonwealth have still a greater and much more important interest.

But it may be said that the principles laid down above, would give the public immense trouble in the maintenance and education of children. Parents, when they separated, might be disposed to abandon their children. Constituted as society now is, there might be some difficulty on this head ; though it is doubted whether there would be any greater than there is at present. If parents lose their affection for each other, it does not necessarily follow that they will also lose it for their children ; and if not, they will mutually try to do the best they can for them. But, be not alarmed, the above principles are not intended for the present state of society at all, and not until all children are provided for by the public, (who are not sufficiently provided for by their parents) both as it regards their maintenance and education ; so that, whether their parents should be living or dead, whether they lived together or lived separately, no children should be allowed to be in want, or to grow up in ignorance ; but well provided for as long as there should be property enough in the common-



wealth to maintain and educate them. Let all parents have the privilege of maintaining and educating their own children, in their own way, if they will ; but if they will not, or even do not, they should be considered culpable, and no longer worthy of being guardians of their own children. All this I would do by a direct tax on property ; but if the public opinion should be in favor of a *parent* tax, in addition to the *public* tax on property, for the purpose of maintaining and educating all the children in the state, it would not be very objectionable, on condition that those parents who should maintain and educate their own children, free of expense to the state, should be exonerated from paying the parent tax ; but not the property tax ; for at all events all the children which should be born, should be well maintained, and well educated. But it should also be observed that, when schools are, what they ought to be, schools of industry as well as of science, there will be but very little public expense for schools, excepting for infant schools, because the scholars will nearly support themselves by their own labour.

When these regulations, in regard to the maintenance and education of children shall be carried into effect, then the proposed regulations, in regard to matrimony, would be attended with no evil consequences whatever ; but on the contrary, would be productive of much good. But even now, in the present state of society, it is a query, and is seriously doubted, whether the consequences of the regulations proposed above, would cause more difficulty and trouble on the whole, or even half so much, as is now caused by the present arbitrary and tyrannical law of marrying for life.

But it will be perceived, and I wish to have it distinctly understood, that we propose no change in (not in what *is*, altogether, but in what *ought* to be) the present practice, until there is a change in the law ; and whenever there is or shall be a change in the law, to act under that law, agreeably to the law, for the time being, will be acting just as legally, as it is now legal to marry for life.

A. K.



## LETTER V.

*To the Editor of the "Trumpet."*

SIR,—I have already expressed a desire that you should co-operate with me in trying to meliorate the condition of the female part of community ; for though the condition of many men is not at all to be envied, yet the condition of a much greater proportion of women is, as I apprehend, still more deplorable. In my last I fully exposed the principles which have heretofore given you so much alarm, (merely because you did not understand them, as I conceive,) and against which you have cautioned all fathers and mothers who feel for the welfare of their sons, and more especially for their daughters ; for as such I have understood your language ; but we shall now see what you have to urge against any thing for which we contend. That our principles are not novel ; but are such as have been long since openly avowed, I shall show by copying an extract from the following address which was printed in, and bound up

with, Matthew Carey's quarto edition of the Bible, printed at Philadelphia, in the year 1802, entitled "A Clergyman's Address to married persons at the altar." I shall alter the phraseology of some parts so as to suit my own views ; but not so as to vary the argument, in the least, in regard to the principle for which I have contended ; and that you, and our readers, generally, may know my words from the clergyman's in the following extract, they are all inclosed in brackets.—Aside, therefore, from what is inclosed in brackets, the Clergyman's words are as follow :—

"The duties between man and wife are various and important. They suppose the union not of *persons* only, but also and principally of *affections*. It is not joining of *hands*, but of *hearts*, which constitutes marriage in the sight of [reason and common sense.] This alone brings and preserves the sexes together, and both [consummates] and perfects this most solemn and [virtuous] connection. But where this is wanting, the mere cohabitation of man and woman, in spite of all the ceremonies in the world, is nothing better than a legal prostitution. The office says, and with great propriety, that, so many as are coupled together otherwise than [reason and common sense] allow, are not joined together of [love and affection,] neither is the matrimony [chaste.]

"See, then, that no notions of interest or convenience deceive you into a notion that you love one another, while you do not. It is not the bare form of vowing in the most solemn manner at the altar, that can possibly give a sanction to falsehood, or render innocent such mercenary lies.

"Trifle not, I charge you, in this solemn instance, with the [works] of *Nature, truth, your own hearts, and your own comfort!* Surely of all kinds and degrees of prostitution, that which screens itself under cover of the law, is the most criminal ; and she who gives her hand to the man whom she does not in fact prefer to [every other man whom she can obtain,] is almost as worthless to all intents and purposes as a common prostitute. [Truth] never [tolerates] the violation of nature, nor suffers it to take place with impunity. But this must be the case in every marriage where natural attachment is wanting. And that family is uniformly cursed with the most substantial wretchedness, where there subsists no love between the heads of it." Then follows good and wholesome advice, to which no one could materially object, making in all about twice as much more than what I have quoted above.

The above embraces all the principles for which we contend, which, when carried out to their full extent, would lead to all the practice for which we contend. You may substitute just what you please for the words inclosed in brackets, it will not alter the principle in the least. But when the clergyman says, as he does in the latter part of the address, "A wife should not only love her husband, but on every occasion show him all the attention in her power" I cannot fully agree with him ; but would say that a woman ought not to marry a man, and will not if she studies her own happiness, whom she does not love ; but whether she continues to love him or not, will not depend on a sense of duty or obligation growing out of her vow at the altar, but entirely on his continuing to be lovely in her estimation. While she lives with him, whether she loves him or not, it will be best for her, and most likely to promote her hap-

piness, to treat him with all due respect. But *love* him she cannot unless he continues to be lovely.

Now if, as the clergyman says, nature is violated "in every marriage where natural attachment is wanting," why is not nature equally violated in continuing the cohabitation when, from any cause whatever, the "natural attachment" has ceased to exist? And if she who thus violates nature in the first instance, merely because she can do it "under cover of the law," subjects herself to a "prostitution of all kinds and degrees, the most criminal," and "is almost as worthless to all intents and purposes as a common prostitute," what is she who continues thus to violate, &c. merely because she is so situated that she can do it legally, when there is no longer a union of *hearts* and *affections*; when she no longer prefers the man who is called her husband, and with whom she cohabits "to all the world," (to use the clergyman's own words) or to every other man whom she can obtain if she would (to use my words?) Why is she any different now in reason, in nature, in truth, or in common sense, from what she would have been to have done exactly the same thing at first, which, according to the clergyman I have quoted, would have rendered her "almost as worthless as a common prostitute?" Nothing but the law can make the least shadow of difference. And yet the clergyman says, "where union of *hearts* and *affections* is wanting, the mere cohabitation of man and woman, *in spite of all ceremonies in the world*, is nothing better than a legal prostitution." I hope therefore, sir, that I have been able to convince you that if our principles are erroneous on this subject, they are by no means novel. We only wish that these principles, being good, as well as just and true, as we believe them to be, should be carried out fully into practice. That we should study *Nature*, and follow her in all her ramifications; believing that Nature never errs. That we should not only recommend, but adopt, and carry into practice, as far as we can, or as far as circumstances will permit, all the principles which we find in perfect unison with the nature of things, totally regardless of what other men, who lived in other ages, have either thought or done. We live for ourselves, and for the living, not for the dead. They could make no law, nor establish any customs which are at all binding on us, any farther than we approve of them. Such are the principles which not only have been discovered, but which have been recommended by the wise and the good from time immemorial. "But he that letteth will let, till he is taken out of the way." So long as moneyed institutions and learned professions are allowed to hold such universal sway over the great mass of what are called the common people, as they do at present, it will be utterly impossible that there should be any thing like either rational liberty or perfect equality in this country. A. K.



## LETTER VI.

*To the Editor of the "Trumpet."*

SIR.—I have now presented you and the public with all my views on the subject of matrimony, so far as it regards the moral principles by

which matrimony should be regulated and governed : and in our last, in order to show that my views are neither novel nor erroneous, I adduced the doctrine laid down by a clergyman, whose address I find in my great Bible ; which address has been before the public at least nearly thirty years, and how much longer I am unable to say, without its soundness ever being so much as once called in question, so far as my knowledge extends. I have therefore nothing further to add on this subject, until I see what you have to urge against what I have already written. And if you make no reply, I shall take your silence as a tacit acknowledgment that my principles are correct, or at least, that you have nothing to urge against them. But before I close, I wish to call your attention once more to the first subject, that of God, and that you may know the whole extent of my scepticism, unbelief, or atheism, I will refer you to an article below, headed "*Thoughts on God.*" It is so very wicked that I have composed it with my own hands in my own new system of orthography, which I am not certain that you will be able to read, as I suppose your time is otherwise so much taken up that you have paid but very little attention to it. Should this be the fact, if you will only give me a hint of it, I will copy it all out for you, in the common orthography, on condition that you will publish it in the Trumpet, and undertake to refute its errors. You may say, perhaps, it is so blasphemous that you will not disgrace your columns with it. But why is it any more blasphemous for me to say just what I think about my God than it is for you to say what you think about your's, which you never hesitate to do. And if, in describing the character of my God, I blaspheme against your's ; then you, in describing the character of your God, blaspheme against mine. So here we are on equal ground, and may criminate and recriminate, we never shall be able to tell who is the greatest blasphemer.

You have already pledged yourself to me, sir, and to the public, that you should "assault" my "atheism" whenever you had an "opportunity."—I gave you the earliest opportunity I possibly could, as you will find in the fourth number of the Investigator, and have thought you were waiting, perhaps, to know more fully what my atheism was, before you made the "assault ;" for I had no right to doubt but that you meant to make it whenever you had a good "opportunity." I have now let you know, if you can read the article, the full extent of my atheism, in every sense of the word.—I shall think, therefore, and the public will think too, if you do not make the assault now, it is because you see me so entrenched about with truth, reason, and the nature of things, on every side, that you see no vulnerable point where you can commence the attack with the least probability of success.

Another reason may possibly deter you—the same that keeps all the papers in the city silent in regard to me and the Investigator—they are unwilling to let the public know, any farther than they find it out, without their aid, that there is such a paper in the city, as the one of which I have the honor (for I consider it as such) to be the editor ; so you, as I apprehend, are afraid to agitate the question any more in the Trumpet, lest you should be under the necessity of letting your readers know that there are opinions concerning God, other than your own, and which you are unable to refute ; and it might give your readers a wish to see more of those

opinions. In a word, and to speak perfectly plain, they might feel disposed to take the Investigator, which would most assuredly lead them to give up the Trumpet as soon as their present subscription expires. I do not mean to assert that this would inevitably be the fact; I only surmise that these may be your fears.

Now to refute all my supposed erroneous notions of the Deity, you only have to prove the existence of an intelligent Being, who is not organic,—and therefore is totally and altogether without organs of sense. For the moment you admit organs of sense, you want an organizer of your God, and are as much bound to prove *his* existence, as I want an organizer of myself, and am bound to prove *his* existence. But if you admit the existence of a God without sense, as you must do if you admit the existence of a God without organs of sense, then there will not be the least shadow of difference between your God and mine. Having therefore, not only traced, but even *chased* your God from every position he holds, in the christian world, driven him from every post, and followed him till he is lost in an incomprehensible principle or power, wholly void of sense, being without organs of sense, and of course without intelligence, what need is there of preaching to support the character of such a God. He has no character which he can lose, and none that needs to be defended. All your preaching therefore, as well as all other preaching, about God, heaven, eternity—to say nothing of hell and the devil, except it be the heaven or hell in our own minds, growing out of the virtues or vices of our own hearts, is, in my apprehension, not only vain and foolish, but also fraudulent and wicked; for it is taking money from the people under false pretences—yca, it is no better than robbery; it is, in fact, swindling!

Now, if you have any thing to answer, come out and defend yourself, and the brethren of your cloth, or else admit, what I verily believe to be the truth, that the above charges are just.

Having freed my mind, I shall now bid you adieu until you are ready and willing to meet in the columns of the Trumpet, or some one else is willing to take up the glove, which I here throw down, and meet me in your stead.

ABNER KNEELAND.

The following is the article alluded to in the last of the above letters, which is here inserted, not only in the new system, but also in the common orthography, that the reader may perceive the full extent of my scepticism. This is a good article to show a comparative view of the two systems of orthography. They are both printed in the same size of type, yet one makes 75 lines, and the other only 67, a difference of 10 per cent. which would be of itself an object worth saving; but this is nothing in comparison with the time it would save in learning children to read and spell.

#### THOUGHTS ON GOD.

Ov fiat bèng òr prinsipl hòu criscuns còl gòd, lòrd, òlmùt, (ä bí sévral úúr nàms to h'è í can atàc no mèng h'è'r) í nò nòhng: ä it wòd bé fie h'it òv vànùt in mé èvn to prétend to hav èni nòlj en suð á sub-ject. Yt í can ðlp mí fiets abut it. If suð á bèng dus àctúal ex-ist, ä nòs òl fings, hé nòs fie sènsènti òv mí hert, ä fie ònèst òv mí asèverànš. H'è'r mã bé sd òv hus existènc h'r, í dèt h'is hàvng èl'r

nólj ór mteljeng. Fær í am sûr hár can hé no nólj h'r hár is no sens; á í canot censèv ov hár bèlj éni sens h'r hár er no òrgans ov sens; á it is not préténd bi éni wun, fiat í nó ov, fiat hie bèlj cold god is an òrganisd bèlj. But on hie suposisiñ fiat sud á bèlj dus actuali exist, h't must í hink ov him? Ns í admit, as í canot dénì, hie existeng ov an incompéhensibl prinsipl ór pær h'è coikns into líf òl animatd nàtúr, á úfir lívig mátr, as plants á trés, h'è per má bé cold god fòr hie sák ov á nàm, fiò í sé no nesésiti ov éni nàm fòr it. Fòr, áftur òl, òl fiat í nó ov it, ór can nó ov it, is from hie hups fiat í béhold, á from hie facts h'è í nó to exist; fòr béyònd hies, í nó nóhig. Júng h'r from hie hups fiat í sé, á from hie facts fiat í nó, á takig it fòr gránda fiat òl h'è í discívr has prosèdd from god, ór from h't gódist's còl god, in sum wá ór úfir, ór in sum sens ov hie wurd ór úfir, í do not hink him so god as it is sd hé is bí sum, nor so bad as it is sd hé is bí úfirs, nòr hef so god as í wunç fiat him to hé. N's, í do not blám him fòr bèlj no betr, nòr pràs him fòr bèlj so god, bélevig as í do, fiat h'r hé is, hé is nésesenli hoot hé is, á fiat hé can no mòr ðanj his òn nàtúr fían í can ðanj mìn.

Èlr God cod hav had hups betr fían fíá er, íf hé wod, but wod not; ór els hé wod hav had hups betr fían fíá er, íf hé cod, but cod not; ór els hé is perfectli sàtisfíd wíth òl hups as fíá er. In hie furst instanç, hé is désérvin no pràs; in hie sècund, hé is an object ov piti, ráhr fían blám; but in hie hurd, hé díffs in nóhig fiat í can persèv from nàtúr: á bèlj sàtisfíd wíth hímself, á wíth évri fíng els, hóf sòd not í bé sàtisfíd to?—á bèlj sàtisfíd, hóf sòd í ask him fòr éni fíng?—í wíl ask him fòr nóhig; bécòs òl hie god h'è hé can bestò, hé dus bestò wíthut mí ástíng. Hóf sòd í fíng him fòr éni fíng? Fòr hé can no mòr wíthhold hie god hé bestòs, admítig him to bé perfect á undányabl, fían hie sun can wíthhold its lít á hét. & íf hé wod bestò éni mòr god on mé fían hé dus, íf hé cod, but canot, it is as unfórtúnat fòr him as it is fòr mé. H'r, bélevig in his undányabiliti, í can nèir pràs him nòr blám him fòr bèlj h't hé is, olhò í am perfectli sàtisfíd fiat hé sòd bé as hé is, évn as í am sàtisfíd to bé as í am. & hie rèsn í am so sàtisfíd is, perhàps, bécòs í nó hat h'l í exist, í hav no pur to bé, fòr hie fílm bèlj, úfirwís fían as í am.

Heng í can sé no object in wíthspín God, unl's hies exprésñs ov sàtisfáciñ (h'è er nésesenli ònli as fíá tend to vr òn hápines) má bé consídrd wíthspín. Hies exprésñs grò vt ov vr òn fèlhys, h'è fèlhys cónstítút vr òn hápines. Heng í must bé óbvius fiat God recoirs no ðúrds, no témpis ór públic hòls, fòr his òn sák; but, íf próprti yúsd, wé ned fím fòr hie sák ov vrsélv's, á ov vr çíldren, as fíá er nésesen fòr vr òn impròvment á hápines as wíl as fíars. & hie mòr wé promòt vr òn hápines, á hie hápines ov vr spèsis, hie mòr, as í censèv, wé act agrèabl to hie perfèçñ ov mórál nàtúr, á ov còrs hie most agrèabl to hie vil ov God, íf God has éni wíl; á, íf hé is suséptibl ov plézúr, fíé mòr hé must bé plèsd.

God, hóvvr ór h't'r hé má hé, stands in hie sàm rélán to òl crètúrs as hé dus to éni, á fí'r must ècoali délít in hie hápines ov òl.

Hies er mí vús, sèntiments á fèlhys in rélán to hie bèlj cold God, admítig fiat sud á bèlj as God is sd to hé dus actuali exist. If fíá er røg, í présúm hé wíl coréct fím, íf hé hav éni wís fiat fíá sòd bé coréctd. If hé dus not coréct fím, it must bé èlr bécòs hé canot, ór wíl

net; òr els bécòs fiá er pèrfectli indifrent to him. But if he èvils á he èrrs òv man er pèrfectli indifrent to God, n'g hé is he fèhr òv he hù-man ràg, is it pòsibl fiat hé is á bèng òv intèljeng? Sìrlh, indèd, í hìnk nèt.

If úfirs hìnk difrentli h'r, lt him sò bètr rèsns fòr fiar hòts fìan í hav sòn fòr mìn. But unles, á until, God mànifests himsèlf to mé, in á wá fiat hé has nèvr yt dun, í sal bé úndr he nesésiti òv stil hìnkìng in régerd to him, (as wl as on òl úfirs súbjects, until í am tòt bètr) as í nò do; á sal bélèv fiat í am rìt.

The above being afterwards inserted in the Investigator, in the common orthography, for the benefit of all readers, is, for the same purpose, repeated here.

#### THOUGHTS ON GOD.

Of that being or principle whom christians call god, lord, almighty, (and by several other names to which I can attach no meaning whatever) I know nothing : and it would be the height of vanity in me even to pretend to have any knowledge on such a subject. Yet I cannot help my thoughts about it. If such a being does actually exist, and knows all things, he knows the sincerity of my heart, and the honesty of my asseverations.—Whatever may be said of his existence, however, I doubt his having either knowledge or intelligence. For I am sure there can be no knowledge where there is no sense ; and I cannot conceive of there being any sense where there are no organs of sense ; and it is not pretended by any one that I know of, that the being called god is an organized being. But on the supposition that such a being does actually exist, what shall I think of him ? Now I admit, as I cannot deny, the existence of an incomprehensible principle or power which quickens into life all animated nature, and other living matter, as plants and trees, which power may be called god for the sake of a name, though I see no necessity of any name for it. For, after all, all that I know of it, or can know of it, is from the things that I behold, and from the facts which I know to exist ; for beyond these, I know nothing. Judging therefore from the things that I see, and from the facts that I know, and taking it for granted that all which I discover has proceeded from god, or from what godists call god, in some way or other, or in some sense of the word or other, I do not think him so good as it is said he is by some, nor so bad as it is said he is by others, nor half so good as I once thought him to be. Nevertheless, I do not blame him for being no better, nor praise him for being so good, believing as I do, that whatever he is, he is necessarily what he is, and that he can no more change his own nature than I can change mine.

Either God could have had things better than they are, if he would, but would not ; or else he would have had things better than they are, if he could, but could not ; or else he is perfectly satisfied with all things as they are. In the first instance, he is deserving no praise ; in the second, he is an object of pity, rather than blame ; but in the third, he differs in nothing that I can perceive from nature : and being satisfied with himself, and with every thing else, why should not I be satisfied too ? and being satisfied, why should I ask him for any thing ?—I will ask him for nothing ; because all the good which he can bestow, he does bestow without my

asking. Why should I thank him for any thing? For he can no more withhold the good he bestows, admitting him to be perfect and unchangeable, than the sun can withhold its light and heat. And if he would bestow any more good on me than he does, if he could, but cannot, it is as unfortunate for him as it is for me. Therefore, believing in his unchangeability, I can neither praise him nor blame him for being what he is, although I am perfectly satisfied that he should be as he is, even as I am satisfied to be as I am. And the reason I am so satisfied is, perhaps, because I know that while I exist, I have no power to be, for the time being, otherwise than as I am.

Hence I can see no object in worshipping God, unless these expressions of satisfaction (which are necessary only as they tend to our own happiness) may be considered worship. These expressions grow out of our own feelings, which feelings constitute our own happiness. Hence it must be obvious that God requires no churches, no temples or public halls, for his own sake; but, if properly used, we need them for the sake of ourselves, and of our children, and they are necessary for our own improvement and happiness as well as theirs. And the more we promote our own happiness, and the happiness of our species, the more, as I conceive, we act agreeably to the perfection of moral nature, and of course the most agreeably to the will of God, if God has any will; and if he is susceptible of pleasure, the more he must be pleased.

God, whoever or whatever he may be, stands in the same relation to all creatures as he does to any, and therefore must equally delight in the happiness of all.

These are my views, sentiments, and feelings, in relation to the being called God, admitting that such a being as God is said to be does actually exist. If they are wrong, I presume he will correct them, if he have any wish that they should be corrected. If he does not correct them, it must be either because he cannot, or will not; or else because they are perfectly indifferent to him. But if the evils and the errors of man are perfectly indifferent to God, notwithstanding he is the father of the human race, is it possible that he is a being of intelligence? Surely, indeed, I think not.

If others think differently however, let them show better reasons for their thoughts than I have shown for mine. But unless, and until, God manifests himself to me, in a way that he has never yet done, I shall be under the necessity of still thinking in regard to him (as well as on all other subjects until I am taught better) as I now do; and shall believe that I am right.

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Since the Rev. Thomas Whittemore, editor of the *Trumpet*, has treated the above, as well as the preceding letters, with utter silence, we now solicit the attention of any other of the clergy, to whom these presents may come, and not only *invite* them, but respectfully and specially *request* them, to point out whatever is deemed to be erroneous in the preceding work, or in the above statements; and show as good reasons for their opinions as are here given for a contrary belief.

It is time that the clergy were called upon, one and all, to prove their dogmas true, or else quit their trade. There is nothing essential to christianity, or which can be claimed as peculiarly christian, that is even suscep-



tible of proof. Nothing strictly moral can be claimed as being exclusively christian, or as being originally taught by the supposed founder of that sect. The very best morals in the new testament had been taught by Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, 500 years before. And, aside from its pretended miracles and the doctrine of a future life founded on a resurrection of the dead, together with the existence of a being called God, his opposite called the devil, others called angels, spirits, ghosts, demons, as also the places called heaven and hell, wherein does christianity differ (so far as it is good) from the moral precepts taught by all good men from the remotest antiquity? But none of the above particulars, which distinguish christianity from other dogmas, perhaps equally but not more erroneous, have been proved, or are even susceptible of proof. Yea, more; the clergy are becoming too wise to attempt to prove them. But they will be under the necessity of making the attempt, ere long, or else lose many out of their congregations, and if they do make the attempt, as they are well aware, they will lose more. A studied silence is now observed in regard to the works and labours of Free Enquirers; and the knowledge of them must extend through the medium of their own works alone. The clergy seem to be perfectly conscious of the invulnerability of the ground Free Enquirers have assumed, as well as the weakness and untenableness of their own cause. Hence prudence may dictate to them what they may consider the wisest course, namely, to avoid coming in contact.

We here once more, or rather I, (for I do not wish to implicate any other, with my sins) commit the foregoing work, with this appendage, into the hands of a discerning public; not pledging myself to take notice of every thing that may be said about it; but should any errors in regard to matters of fact be pointed out, and should the evidence adduced cause a reasonable doubt of their being true, as herein stated, during my life-time, and while I am able to write, the public may rest assured they shall hear from me again, either in defence of what is here published, or else in acknowledgment of the error. So says the public's obedient servant,

ABNER KNEELAND.

*Boston, September, 1831.*

THE END.