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A Discourse

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A

DISCOURSE,

ON THE

GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY

OF THE

NEW-TESTAMENT:

DELIVERED AT NEW-HAVEN,

SEPTEMBER 10th, 1793,

AT THE

ANNUAL LECTURE,

APPOINTED BY THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF
CONNECTICUT: ON THE TUESDAY BEFORE
THE PUBLIC COMMENCEMENT.

By Timothy Dwight D.D.

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE testimony, adduced in the following discourse, was taken principally from Dr. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*. Several other valuable articles of testimony, collected with an intention to insert them, were omitted, on account of the length of the discourse; as were also some additional arguments.

A little more than half of what is now published was delivered from the desk. If the writer is not deceived, the remainder will be found to be pertinent to the principal design. He believes the testimony to be justly represented; but, if in the hurry and anxiety, occasioned by a long continued sickness of his family and of his parishioners, any mistakes have been committed, he presumes they will be pardoned.

T. D W I G H T.

Greenfield, July 19th, 1794.

E R R A T A.

PAGE.	LINE.	FOR.	READ.
8	20	<i>principle</i>	<i>principles.</i>
12	15	<i>complate</i>	<i>complex.</i>
17	30	<i>authenticity</i>	<i>authority.</i>
22	10	<i>Mariron</i>	<i>Marcion.</i>
25	24	<i>of</i>	<i>to.</i>
52	<i>last</i>	<i>four</i>	<i>few.</i>
53	16	<i>of taxing</i>	<i>of the taxing.</i>
54	<i>note</i>	<i>(at the end)</i>	<i>add Lardner.</i>
59	19	<i>new entirely</i>	<i>new and entirely.</i>
62	2	<i>ignomy</i>	<i>ignominy.</i>
64	20	<i>preferred</i>	<i>preserved.</i>
65 & 67	<i>note</i>	<i>Jevell's Boyl. Lect.</i>	<i>read Twells's Boyl. Lect.</i>
67	18	<i>lhaken</i>	<i>shaken.</i>
<i>ibid</i>	29	<i>after Ferom</i>	<i>dele , and write .</i>
72	12	<i>sucessors</i>	<i>successors.</i>
73	1	<i>desrines</i>	<i>doctrines.</i>
<i>ibid.</i>	14	<i>Romans</i>	<i>Roman.</i>
74	22	<i>after publicly</i>	<i>dele ,</i>
76	18	<i>dele old.</i>	
<i>ibid.</i>	23	<i>after observed.</i>	<i>write</i>



A
DISCOURSE
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NEW-TESTAMENT.



JOHN XXI. 24.

This is the Disciple, who testifieth these things, and wrote these things ; and we know, that his testimony is true.

THIS passage asserts the book, in which it is found to have been truly written by St. John. Should the assertion be fairly proved by the highest evidence, applicable to subjects of this nature, the Genuineness and Authenticity of the whole New-Testament would, probably, be, by most persons, acknowledged to be also proved. As the gospel of St. John contains Narrations, and Doctrines, as surprizing and improbable, as any which are contained in the other books of the New-Testament ; as the admission of these will be generally allowed to be an admission of those also, and

will involve difficulties, in the eye of human faith, of the same nature, and the same magnitude ; and as the same evidence will support both alike , few persons, who are wholly persuaded, that the gospel, attributed to St. John, was written, and truly written, by him, will hesitate to receive the whole New-Testament as an authentic account of the life, death, and resurrection, the instructions, institutions, and precepts of JESUS CHRIST.

SHOULD these observations be allowed to be just, it will follow, as the unavoidable consequence, that, if the Gospel in question can be proved to be a genuine and faithful record of St. John, the New-Testament is the Word, and Christianity the Religion, of the SON of GOD. For the authors of the New-Testament have declared themselves to be inspired by the Spirit of GOD, with the unerring knowledge of his holy pleasure, in all things pertaining to life and godliness.

To the scheme of discourse, hinted above, the text most naturally leads. It may however be advantageous to extend my observations beyond these limits, and to examine the authenticity of the whole volume of the New-Testament. All the books in this volume stand on the same ground, and are supported by the same arguments. The text may, therefore, be fairly viewed as a proper theme of a discourse, designed to authenticate the whole. This purpose I shall at-

tempt to accomplish, in the following manner.

1. I SHALL endeavor to shew, that the several books in the New-Testament, particularly the Historical books, were written by the persons, whose names they bear.

2. THAT the writers were neither deceived, nor deceivers.

3 THAT their writings have descended, without any material alterations, to the present time.

THE first of these propositions includes the first declaration of the text, extended to the several writers of the New Testament. The other two propositions, if true, will evince, that the present state of the testimony, ascribed in the text to St. John, perfectly accords with its original state ; and thus enlarges the last declaration of the text into a solid ground of faith, for mankind, at the present time.

In support of the first of these propositions-----That the several books of the New Testament, particularly the Historical books, were written by the persons, whose names they bear ; it may be observed in the first place--That the state of the Jews, and of the Romans, as also of other nations, so far as it is either directly declared, or alluded to, in these books, is abundantly attest-

ed by other writers of undoubted authority, and is, therefore, truly represented.

PARTICULARLY there were, at the times specified, such persons in Judea, as Herod the great, his four sons, Herodias, Pontius Pilate, Cyrenius or Quirinus, Felix, Porcius Festus, Annas, Caiaphas, Lyfias, John the Baptist, and Drufilla ; who had the characters, and situations in life, testified by the Evangelists.

SUCH writers have also attested, that, at the times, and in the places mentioned, there were such persons, as Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, Gallio, Sergius Paulus, Cornelius, and Aretas ; living in the stations, and characters, here assigned to them : And,

s/ THAT there were such classes of men, as Pharisees and Sadducees, Scribes and Lawyers, Herodians and Samaritans, of the same characters, for principle and conduct, as are here ascribed to them. [^]

THESE customs of the Jews are also abundantly evinced to have existed, at this time ; viz. That they came from the different countries, where they lived, to the feasts at *Jerusalem* ; daily frequented the temple ; prayed, at the third and at the ninth hour ;* fasted until the morning prayer was

* Hence the force of St Peter's reply, Acts 2 15.

ended ; were greatly zealous for the law, and for the temple ; worshipped in synagogues ; read stately portions of the Old Testament ; practised the vow of the Nazarite, shaving their heads ; inflicted forty stripes save one ;* allowed and exercised furious acts of private zeal for Religion ; payed tribute to the Romans, and esteemed it a grievance ; had publicans of their own nation, and abhorred them, for being in this office ; hated, and vehemently persecuted the Christians ; were zealous for the Sabbath, circumcision, &c. even to bigotry ; and considered the rest of mankind, as odious and contemptible, with an unexampled detestation.

It is also clearly proved, that their high priests rent their clothes, on extraordinary occasions ; that the Pharisees and the Sadducees were steady and bitter enemies to each other ; that the Jews and Samaritans hated each other, to a degree wholly singular ; that, out of Judea, the Jews prayed customarily by the sides of rivers, and seas ; that they laboriously made profelytes ; that they were astonishingly corrupted in doctrine, and in manners ; and that they and the Samaritans, at this time, universally and strongly expected the coming of the Messiah.

With equal clearness are we certified, that the Roman Governor had, in Judea,

* Such as that, recorded Acts 21. 12.

the power of life and death; that public notifications were in Jerufalem, customarily written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; that criminals, under the Roman government, always carried their own crosses; were customarily scourged, mocked and abused, as CHRIST is said to have been; that, among the Jews, persons were put to death without the city; that burial was not always allowed to malefactors; but that Roman governors might, and usually did, allow it; and that the Jews usually embalmed their dead, in the manner recorded by the Evangelists.

WITH the like certainty are we also taught, that the Romans examined prisoners by questioning and scourging, excepting Roman citizens, who could lawfully be neither bound, nor scourged, especially when uncondemned; that the Roman Government gave the power of life and death to such officers as Lyfias; heard no accusers, in the absence of the accused; kept accused persons in custody, as Paul was kept; sent prisoners from the provinces to Rome, and delivered them to the Captain of the guard; and, at that time, generally treated all nations, particularly the Jews, and the Christians as being Jews, with mildness and equity.

It is also entirely established, that the temple was forty-six years in building; that

Judas of Gallilee and the Egyptian mentioned by Lyfias, Acts 21, 38, existed, and did the things ascribed to them ; that Herodias was first married to Philip, and then to Herod, his brother ; that John, the Baptist was put to death by the same Herod ; that the Emperor Claudius banished the Jews from Rome ; and that, in his time, there was a famine throughout the land of Judea.

OF the facts and persons connected immediately with the purpose of the Gospel I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

THE writers who have singly testified to some, and collectively to all, the things above-mentioned, are Josephus, Philo, Cicero, Tacitus, Ulpian, Hermogenian, Marcian, Tertullian, Celsus, Petronius, Dio, Suetonius, and several others.

THE two first of these writers were Jews ; the rest, except Tertullian, were Heathens ; and there is not one instance, in these testimonies of Jews, or Heathens, in which either of them at all intended to witness any fact, in favor of the gospel, or of christians. All of them, who knew any thing of christianity, were decided enemies to the christians, and their testimony, therefore, especially when we take into view their personal reputation, and their advantages for knowing the things, which they assert, is completely satisfactory.

IN few methods, could the genuineness of the New-Testament be more certainly proved, than in this. It is utterly impossible for a writer, dealing largely in allusion to the customs, and in assertions concerning the facts, and persons, of a preceding age, not to be betrayed into many mistakes concerning them. It is not a little difficult for any writer to possess the knowledge, necessary to avoid such mistakes; and far more difficult for him to form his mind into a train of thinking, exactly suited to the circumstances of a preceding age, and to keep his attention invariably fixed on so complete an object, as not frequently to wander from truth and propriety.

VIRGIL, a man of primary abilities, and vast industry, has, in his *Æneis*, attempted to present the world with the manners, proper to the several personages, mentioned in that work; and undoubtedly designed, that they should, as much as might be, suit the age, in which those personages lived. But it is obvious to every attentive reader, that the manners of that poem much better suit the age, in which the writer lived. Yet a careful and just representation of manners was probably one principal object, in the eye of that ingenious poet throughout his work.

JOSIPPON, or Joseph Benchorion, a writer of the tenth, or eleventh century, has undertaken to write a History of the Jews;

in which he professes to have lived, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. This writer, notwithstanding the very great pains he has visibly taken, to pass for the character which he professes himself to be, has, in many instances, betrayed himself; and that so far, as to speak of several things, which existed, some centuries after the time, in which he pretends to have lived.

WRITERS of the first talents, art, and information, have ever found this difficulty insurmountable, when they have made attempts of this nature; but it must have been peculiarly insurmountable by the writers of the New Testament, had they been impostors. Their character, education, and information, could, in no degree, qualify them for a successful imposition of this kind. The truth and accuracy with which they have evidently written, on the subjects above specified, even in a vast number of very minute articles will, to every person, qualified to judge, appear to be an unanswerable argument of the genuineness of these writings.

2. THE books of the New Testament have been quoted by both Catholic and Heretical Christians, and also by Heathens, at such periods, and in such a manner, as to put their genuineness beyond every reasonable doubt.

The four Evangelists, and the Acts of the Apostles, are quoted, in the two first centuries, by Justin Martyr, Clemens of Alexandria, and Tertullian :

Mathew, Mark, and Luke, by Clemens of Rome :

Mathew, Mark, and John, by Polycarp, and Athenagoras :

Luke, and John, by Theophilus of Antioch, and the Epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons, and Mathew by St. Barnabas, and the Acts by the above mentioned Epistle.

BESIDE the above Christian writers, all the Evangelists are quoted by the Emperor Julian, a man every way qualified, and inclined, to expose the falsehood of these writings, if it existed; and are quoted with the fullest proofs, that he had not a doubt of their authenticity.

ALL these books are referred to by Hermas, and the Recognitions of Clement, and by the Heathen Philosophers Celsus, and Porphyry :

Mathew and Mark by Papias, and the Epistle to Diognetus; as John also is by the last mentioned work :

Mathew, Luke, John, and the Acts, by Ignatius, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, and the Testaments of the twelve patriarchs :

Mathew, Luke, and the Acts, by Hegeſippus, and Polycrates :

Mathew, Mark, John, and the Acts by Athenagoras :

Luke, and John, by Tatian .

Luke by Theophilus of Antioch :

John by the Heathen Philosopher Ameliius :

And the Acts by Juſtin Martyr, and Polycarp.

THE ſeveral quotations, here referred to, are made in the very words of the Scriptural writers, as they have deſcended to us. The references frequently contain ſeveral of their words, and always the facts, or ſentiments, recorded by them ; and are made, in a manner ſo plain, that the reference is uſually of equal evidence and authority with the quotation ; and always, at leaſt in my opinion, too evident to allow of a reaſonable doubt.

To the genuinenefs of the Gospels of Mathew and Mark, Papias, within fifty-three years from the date of the firſt Gospel, bears expreſs testimony ; aſſerting them to be the production of the writers ſuppoſed. To the Gospel, at large, Juſtin Martyr, within 77 years from its firſt date, gives the like full testimony ; declaring it to conſiſt of authentic narrations, of CHRIST and his Apoſtles. Tatian compoſed a Harmony of the four gospels, 109 years only, af-

and the first in order was written; as did * Basilides, the Heretic, a commentary, about 60 years after the date of the earliest Gospel. Irenæus, within 115 years, Clement of Alexandria, within 132, and Tertullian, within 137 years from the same date, yield a full and ample testimony to the genuineness of all the books under consideration; as full, I conceive, as can be desired or expressed.

UPWARDS of seventy other persons, many of them of great and deserved reputation for wisdom and integrity, are to be numbered, as additional witnesses to those, whom I have now mentioned: all flourishing within 140 years after the writing of St. Luke's Gospel. Most of these witnesses yield their testimony by quotations and references, too express to be denied, or doubted; while others, in numerous instances of high character, spent much of life in furthering the progress of Christianity, and sealed their testimony with their blood.

IGNATIUS, also, within 41, and the Epistle to Diognetus, ascribed to Justin Martyr, within 77, Melito Bishop of Sardis, within 115, and Clement of Alexandria, within 132 years from the above date, inform us of a Volume, in which these books were collected.

* Basilides declared, that he was instructed by Glaucias, who was taught by the Apostles themselves.

By these writers, the books in question are spoken of in terms of the highest respect; as the word, the preaching of CHRIST; as the scriptures; as the Word of GOD; and as divinely inspired. Thus, for instance, Irenæus declares, that they were written by the will of GOD; that they are to mankind the foundation of faith; and that those who wrote them, were inspired with infallible knowledge of truth, by the HOLY GHOST. Hence he concludes, that to despise them is to despise GOD himself. Athanasius also, at a later period, after recounting the same books of the Bible which we now possess, says; “These are the fountains of salvation; in these alone the doctrine of religion is taught: let no man add to them or take any thing from them.” In general, the sentiments of the ancient Christians, in the ardour of respect for the Scriptures; appear on almost every page; and visibly exceed even the high reverence, in which they are now held by those, who expect from them everlasting life.

In the mean time, it is to be carefully remarked, that the books of the New Testament, are the only books, of which they ever speak in this manner. All others, they uniformly consider, as the mere efforts of men, and of no ^{or} ~~authenticity~~ ^{authenticity} in Religion. This subject they often discuss; and their decision is but one, and deliv-

or/

ered in terms of undoubting confidence. As a full justification of this confidence, they inform us, that they received these books, by most authentic tradition from the Apostles themselves; the whole of which tradition they were able to trace, and to prove. Tertullian particularly asserts, in the fullest manner, that, in the several Apostolical Churches, the clearest evidence of this authenticity might be obtained; as it had been, by himself, in the church at Rome.

ALL these writers flourished, and wrote, within one hundred and fifty years after the date of the first written book of the New Testament; and were born 20, 30, 40, 50, and in some instances 60 years, before the date here ascribed to them. Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, it is generally agreed, were hearers, and companions, of the Apostles themselves; and most, if not all, of those named, as of the second century, conversed with those, who had lived and conversed with the Apostles. These writers were also of very different educations, views, interests, and prejudices; and were inhabitants of Asia Minor, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Crete, Greece, Africa proper, Italy, and Gaul. At a time, when the formation of books was so laborious, and the acquisition of them so difficult, and expensive, it is only to be accounted for, from the peculiar

iar zeal and reverence of the early Christians for the Scriptures, that the New Testament should have been so widely spread, at this early period. Nor could the first Preachers of Christianity have left a fairer proof of their candor, piety, and benevolence, than the singular pains, with which they multiplied, and diffused, the copies of these venerable Oracles.

IN the third century, beginning at less than 150 years, from the date above mentioned, these testimonies, both by quotation and reference, are so multiplied, that they cannot be particularly alluded to, in this Discourse. It ought, however, to be observed, that Caius, Julius Africanus, Origen, Dionisius Bishop of Alexandria, Cyprian, Victorinus Bishop of Pettaw, on the river Drave, and Methodius Bishop of Olympus, in Syria, beside many others, all men of talents and integrity, have, together with Firmilian Bishop of Cæsarea, borne a very full and decisive testimony to the existence, authenticity, facts, and doctrines, of the New Testament. Several of these men were born, in the second century; and some of them, particularly, Origen and Dionisius, were possessed of the greatest advantages, for knowing the whole traditionary, as well as written, History of the Gospel, and of its authors, of the facts, which they have recorded, and of the doctrines, which they have left, for the benefit of succeeding genera-

tions. The testimony, which all these writers have given to the books in question is as decisive, as words can express; and the quotations, which have come down to us, although made for other purposes, and never at all designed for this, and although a part only of the works of these writers is, in any instance, extant, and although in very many instances there is nothing remaining, but a few small fragments, are yet so numerous, that a large part of the whole New-Testament might be collected from them. In the remaining writings of Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenæus alone, as Doctor Lardner has observed there are more quotations of the little volume of the New-Testament, than those of the whole works of Cicero, greatly, and justly, as he has been celebrated for his superior talents, which are now to be found in all the writers of several ages.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that, in the succeeding century, the testimonies, both by quotation and reference, multiply to such a surprising degree, that we find numerous catalogues of the books of the New-Testament left on record; generally the same which we have now; and that not only great numbers of men of high reputation have singly borne this testimony, and in every conceivable method; but several Councils have also given us their united voice, in

support of their authenticity, and inspiration.

I SHALL now beg leave to call your attention to testimony, in some measure, of a different kind: the testimony of those, who have been generally esteemed Heretics. These men, who more, or less, departed from the opinions of the Catholic Church, concerning several scriptural subjects, were under various temptations to lessen or to deny, the authority of the New-Testament, and particularly that of the Historical books. As they embraced their peculiar opinions, principally from preconceived doctrines of Philosophy, the primary source of error, among those who have professed Christianity, they were under much the same temptations to sacrifice the whole New-Testament, as to sacrifice the particular parts, which they actually rejected. Nevertheless we have sufficient assurance, that, even amidst the heat of vehement and ill-conducted controversy, they all regarded the greater part of this Volume, with the highest reverence; and have left behind them valuable attestations of its genuineness and authenticity.

OF these men, in the first Century, or the beginning of the second, Basilides with his followers, and the Carpocratians; in the second Century, Heracleon, Cerdon, the Sethians, Artemon, Hermogenes, Theodotus, Montanus, Praxeas, Cassian, and the

*Manichees, appear to have received the whole of these sacred writings. Basilides and Heracleon commented largely on them; and the five last, in the list here given, quoted them; three of them largely; and all of this number appear to have received them with a respect, probably not inferior to that of the Catholics.

el/ MARK with the Marcionians his followers, Cerinthus, Marcion, Leucius, Apelles, Elxai, and the Paulicians, received, as of divine authority, the greater part of the New-Testament. The Paulicians received all, except the two Epistles of Peter; and these they rejected, merely because he had denied CHRIST. In the mistaking conduct of these men, we have a striking attestation to the genuineness of the sacred books; for, even when hardly pressed in controversy, they acknowledge the great body of them; and, for the rejection of a part, assign, as reasons, their own preconceived opinions, and not any proofs of corruption in the books, which they reject. Even Marcion, the general corrupter of the Bible, and Leucius, the general forger of false scriptures, have exhibited that there were, in their time, the former part of the second Century, genuine and authoritative Scriptures. Otherwise the First could not have acted the part of a corrupter; nor

* With regard to these Heretics, I have followed Dr. Lardner, in preference to Dr. Mosheim.

would the Laſt have acted that of a forger ; it being impoſſible, on any other ſuppoſition, that either means, or temptations to this conduct ſhould exiſt. It ought here to be remarked, that Origen, who probably knew better than any other man, and who has unqueſtionably declared what he knew, aſſerts, that, ſo far as his knowledge extended, the Marcionites, and Valentinians, and perhaps Leucius, or, as he is ſometimes called, Lucanus, were the only perſons, who had ever corrupted the Scriptures. At the ſame time, it ought to be remembered, that this conduct of theſe Heretics was highly advantageous to Chriſtianity ; as it induced the early Chriſtians to ſcrutinize with ſingular care, and to watch with extreme jealouſy, the writings of the Apoſtles.

THIS investigation may, perhaps, be conſidered as more cloſely confined to the Hiſtorical books of the New-Teſtament, than was originally propoſed. As reaſons for this method of treating the ſubject, my Audience are requeſted to obſerve,

1ſt. THAT the ſubject would have been otherwiſe, too extenſive, to be at all fairly handled, on this occaſion :

2d. THAT the very ſame proofs of quotation and reference, as well as almoſt all the other evidence, by which the Hiſtorical

books are supported, are the support, and, as I conceive, equally, of the remaining books. No person, therefore, who admits the validity of this evidence, for the Historical books, will dispute it, as applied to the others.

3d. THE Historical books are the foundation, on which the others wholly rest. In a theological view, therefore, the only view, in which any of them ever became the subjects of controversy, he, who receives the Historical books as genuine, will find no occasion to question the rest.

ON the evidence, here suggested, it may be useful to remark, that the state of things which I have represented, cannot be accounted for, unless the genuineness of these books be acknowledged. That, in so short a time, so many persons, of so many, and so distant countries, of so different educations, habits, prejudices, and views, of so fair a character, of so much understanding, without a selfish end to aim at, without concert, without a design of giving testimony to this point, and without an apprehension that the genuineness of these books either was, or would ever be called into question, should yet, in so many instances, to so great an extent, and with such high and uniform reverence, have thus quoted and referred to them, and thus professedly distinguished them from all others; that they should have

renounced religions, to which before they were habitually attached, even to bigotry, and adopted, from these books, a religion totally new, and singular; and finally that upon a faithful conformity to them they should have thus placed all their hopes of salvation, and have persisted, through life, in a steady and unexampled adherence to them, and to the religion founded on them, against every earthly hope, and with every earthly discouragement; is not only incredible; but, in my apprehension, impossible; on any other supposition, than that these books are the genuine productions of the Apostles, and authentic Narratives of the Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, of JESUS CHRIST, and of the labors of those Apostles, in propagating the Religion, which he taught to mankind.

To the observations, already made, it ought to be added, that, considering the contempt, in which the first Christians were held by the Roman Empire, the testimony ~~to~~ the genuineness of these books, which appears in the remaining works, and monuments, of Heathens, during the above mentioned periods, is as great, as could be reasonably expected. Many are the indubitable testimonies which they have left, not only to facts of the utmost importance to this question, but to the very books themselves. Celsus, particularly, is a witness of the greatest weight, and in a degree, grea-

ter than could fairly be hoped from the smallness of his remaining fragments. His undeniable references to the Historical, and several other, books of the New-Testament, are numerous, and made, within one hundred and thirteen years from the date of St. Luke's Gospel. He was a man of sense and learning, a professed enemy to the Christian Religion, and a laborious and inquisitive champion for Heathenism. His attestations, therefore, will not be disputed. Those of the Emperour Julian, who, after having received a Christian education, and made a Christian profession, publicly declared himself a Heathen, are of the same nature, and in some respects of equal importance. It is true, he did not possess so sound an understanding, nor live at so early a period, as Celsus; but he had, from his education, the fullest opportunity to become acquainted with the books, and the worship, of the Christians, and a sufficient one to learn the facts, which were their declared foundation, and evidence. At the same time, he had all the advantages possible at the period in which he lived, to know, and the utmost disposition to declare, all the defects of that evidence, and all the real, or imagined, weakness in that foundation. Yet he has not, in the least, impeached the facts, or weakened their influence. On the contrary, by acknowledging the books, because their authenticity could not be disputed, and confessing the facts, because their

reality could not be questioned, he has added his own name to the list of valuable witnesses for that Redeemer, whom he wickedly denied, and for that system of Religion, whose doctrines he has childishly labored to overthrow. On these, and other similar testimonies, I shall hereafter make some further observations; and shall only add, in this place, that the edict of Dioclesian, which, in the year three hundred and three, two hundred and forty years after the date so often mentioned, ordered, on the severest penalties, all Christians to surrender the Scriptures, that they might be burned, proves at once that the copies of them were exceedingly numerous, and widely dispersed, and that this sagacious Emperour, and his Court, were fully convinced of the total impossibility of exterminating Christianity, by tortures, however numerous, protracted, or distressing, unless they accomplished the destruction of the books, on which it was founded: a proof of the first magnitude, that Christianity rested originally on the New-Testament.

2d. THE testimony of the Historical Writers of the New-Testament, was true: They were neither deceived, nor deceivers. The two parts of this proposition, I shall take the liberty to consider either separately or together; as may best conduce to their elucidation;

THAT they were not deceived, with regard to the facts, which they have related, is evident, in the first place ; because they were, in every respect, competent judges of them : they had sufficient faculties, and sufficient opportunities.

THE facts, related in the Gospels, may be all comprised under the Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, of JESUS CHRIST ; and those, related in the remaining Historical book, under the title of it--- The Acts of the Apostles.

THE faculties, necessary to form a competent judge of all these facts, are the usual senses of men, and that degree of understanding, which we customarily term Common-sense. It will doubtless be understood, that I assert these to be the only faculties, necessary for this end. Superiour genius, or great attainments of science, are not only not necessary to enable a man perfectly to judge of these subjects, but would, in no wise render him a better judge, than any other man, possessed of the faculties above mentioned. A plain man, thus qualified, would, as perfectly as Aristotle, or Sir Isaac Newton, know whether CHRIST lived, preached, wrought miracles, suffered, died, appeared alive after his death, and ascended to Heaven. The testimony of the senses, under the direction of Common-sense, is the deciding, and the only testimony, by which the

existence of these facts must be determined. No man could, better than the Apostles, judge whether a man were leprous, and restored from his leprosy, by a command; whether Lazarus were dead, and raised to life; and whether CHRIST walked on the waves. Nor could any man with more certainty determine, whether CHRIST, after being dead, and buried, appeared again alive, talked, moved, ate, instructed, comforted, and directed them, rose up from the earth, in a cloud, and disappeared; or whether, at their command, the lame were restored to soundness, the sick to health, and the dead to life. They could, also, as well as the greatest men living, know whether CHRIST taught them the singular precepts, and doctrines, recorded in the Gospels; and whether he lived in that perfectly holy manner, which they have described. It seems, sometimes, to have been imagined, that persons of superior talents would have been better judges of the facts, related in the New-Testament; but the idea cannot be seriously entertained by any person, who has attended to human life. On the contrary, plain men, accustomed to active life, usually judge of facts, with less prejudice, and more accuracy, than philosophers, whose unfortunate disposition to theory and system commonly and greatly warps their judgment from truth.

THE opportunities, which the Apostles had of observing these facts, were also such, that it is difficult to conceive how they could have been better. The Apostles were, for more than three, probably for more than four years, the constant companions of CHRIST, in his most retired, as well as in his most public, hours. They saw, they heard, they knew, every thing concerning him, so far as respects the present subject. Had they discovered the least failing in him, it must have destroyed his whole character, in the eye of persons, who thought him the Messiah; and had there been the least failing in him, they must have discovered it.

THEY were the daily witnesses of his miracles; not of one, two, or twenty; but of multitudes; accomplished invariably; as often as occasions presented themselves; and with as much ease, and certainty, as accompany the most ordinary occurrences of life.

AFTER his resurrection, they had every advantage, which could exist, for knowing whether he appeared alive. Nine times, he appeared to some, or other of them; and twice, to the women, who went to his sepulchre. He ate, he conversed with them, and instructed them, and gave various other proofs of his resurrection, which no man, in his senses, and in the like circumstances, either would, or could dispute.

THE power, which he promised them, of working miracles, was, in that promise, extended through life. Of the fulfilment, they had all possible opportunity, as well as capacity, to judge. If the promise failed of fulfilment, the charm was in a moment dissolved, and the dream at an end. This, it is to be remembered, must have happened, whether they were disposed to it, or not. For, as they published the promise to mankind, at an early period, they put their own character, and that of their master, wholly at hazard; and if the promise were not publicly and evidently fulfilled, the imposture, whether acknowledged by them or not, must have been easily detected by their fellow men.

2d. THEY believed in CHRIST, against all those motives, which usually govern mankind.

WHEN the Apostles first addicted themselves to CHRIST, they possessed, in a riveted degree, the Jewish ideas of a temporal, glorious, conquering, reigning Messiah. This prejudice they plainly held, until the day of Pentecost. It is most wonderful, that, with this prejudice, they should have listened to him at all; for nothing could be more contrary to his real character; nor could any thing more unfit them for believing in a Messiah lowly, despised,

and persecuted. The only rational method of accounting for this fact, is, that he shewed himself to be a person, as extraordinary, as he is described to be in the Gospels. This induced them to attach themselves to him, at first ; and the strong persuasion, which they cherished, that he would assume his proper character, of secular splendour and dominion, contributed to prolong their attachment. In his true character they believed, from necessity and irresistible conviction only, with a slow progress, and a reluctant submission to evidence. All their prejudices were visibly and steadily at war with his declarations, and, from time to time led them to neglect, or to disbelieve, many of his most important communications.

BUT, on the day of Pentecost, this mystery was unfolded to them, at once. From that period, all their preceding hopes vanished. From that period, they cheerfully assumed to themselves the lot of poverty and shame, coolly prepared for uniform opposition and contempt, and advanced to meet persecution, danger, and death, with a constancy, which no enemy could alarm, and no power destroy. Could we so far forsake every dictate of reason, as to suppose them deceived at first, it is wholly impossible, that they should not have awaked from the delusion, at the rousing calls of obloquy and infamy, of the prison and the cross.

It is here carefully to be remembered, that all these evils were uniformly predicted to them, by their master. From him they learned, and believed, that, in following him, they must give up every earthly expectation; must bid adieu to friends, and country, to peace, and competence, to the hope of a settled home, and the pleasures of an affectionate family; must wander through the world hated, afflicted, and tormented; and must end this gloomy career of life with all the miseries, devised by ingenious and malignant persecution. With this melancholy prospect, often called up to view, their ministerial life was begun; and by the severe sufferings, which filled up this prospect, it was accompanied to the end.

ENTHUSIASM has been often objected to the Apostles, as one method of accounting for their adherence to CHRIST, and of lessening the force of their testimony. This, it is presumed, has been done, merely because it was the only method of filling a chasm in the system of Infidelity; for there is not the least appearance of enthusiasm in their character, as it is given to us, either by themselves, or by others. Never were persons less fairly exposed to such an objection. There is nothing in the nature of CHRIST'S life, preaching, or miracles, which could be the object of enthusiastical belief, or which could furnish a ground for

enthusiastical attainment. On the contrary, as has been already observed, to receive him, as the Messiah, required, on their part, a complete sacrifice of every prejudice, and to adhere to him, of every interest. --- Throughout their whole attendance upon his ministry, they discovered a continual opposition to all the peculiar characteristics, which, as the Messiah, he discovered, and were almost daily, with the greatest justice, reproved by him, as being of little faith.

BUT Enthusiasm is weakly alledged, for the purposes of infidelity, even if we should against plain certainty, allow the Apostles to have possessed this character. Enthusiasm would, in no respect, account for the things, for which it is alledged. Enthusiasm could not possibly make its votaries believe, that a man was born blind, and lived blind for twenty years, and then, at a command, received his sight; that men were encrusted with the leprosy, *white as snow*, and, in a moment, were changed into the usual healthful appearance of the human person; and that themselves, with eight or ten thousand others, had eaten to the full of five, or seven loaves, and a few little fishes. Enthusiasm could, in no wise, persuade any person, otherwise possessed of common-sense, that CHRIST daily and alway performed these, and the like, wonderful works, at his pleasure, in the most

public manner, and so as to convince and alarm the whole country of Judea ; that he taught things, different from all, which had been before taught, and wholly superiour to all preceding doctrines of men ; and at the same time, enable that person actually to remember the things themselves, and the words, in which they had been communicated, and to record them for the inspection of others. In a word, to say nothing of the total insufficiency of Enthusiasm to bear men above a whole life of uniform suffering, opposition, want and wretchedness, it could never persuade any man, that, through a long period, he himself was able, with a word, to heal the sick, to restore the lame, and to raise the dead, in the name of JESUS of Nazareth. For these, and the like effects, the cause assigned is wholly inadequate ; and, but for a peculiar spirit of opposition to Christianity, would never, even in the present case, have been suggested by any man, who had the least acquaintance with the human character.

Thus it is, I presume, sufficiently evident, that the Apostles were not deceived.

THAT they were not deceivers, or impostors, will, I trust, be rendered equally evident, by the following considerations.

1st. HAD they been inclined to deceive, it was impossible, that they should ever have

accomplished such a design. The facts, which constitute the sum of their information to mankind, and the foundation of the whole Christian system, were, according to their own representations, of the most public notoriety. They directly declare to the Jews, that they, in numerous and successive instances, were witnesses of these facts, equally with themselves. To the knowledge, which their countrymen possessed, of these facts, as having been eye, and ear witnesses of them, they boldly and steadily appeal; and on this knowledge ground those arguments of conviction, and persuasion, which produced such effects, as never were before, or since, produced by arguments. This is, indeed, very singular conduct for impostors to pursue, and may with confidence be asserted to have existed in no other case of imposition. Nothing is more evident, than that, if the Apostles designed to impose on their countrymen, they could not have adopted more obvious, or more effectual means to defeat the design, at its very commencement. In a word, if the Apostles are believed, in such conduct as this, to have aimed at imposition, they cannot, by those who entertain this belief, be vindicated from the character, either of idiocy, or of phrenzy; and one of these must probably, in the eyes of all persons who deliberately attribute to them such a design, be their real character.

2d. If the Apostles were deceivers, they were deceivers, against all those motives, which, in cases of this nature, have hitherto influenced the human race.

ALL men, who are not wholly deprived of reason, invariably act, with a view to some good, which they expect by acting to obtain. This maxim is as certain, and as acknowledged, as that all bodies gravitate. Arguments are therefore founded on the first of these truths, as firmly, as on the last. The Apostles, then, if deceivers, undoubtedly expected some good from the deceit. But what good could men expect, in the present life, from opposing, without any foundation to rest on, the religion of their country, which, at the same time, they acknowledged to be enjoined by GOD? What, from opposing the religions of the whole human race? What, from asserting a despised and crucified man to be the Son of GOD, and the author of a new and most interesting Revelation of his will; when they knew that themselves, and all who had been acquainted with him, also, knew, that he had given no probable evidence of meriting this character? What good could they expect from asserting themselves to be possessed of the power of working miracles in his name, and from professing their ability, and readiness, to work miracles, of the utmost importance, and publicity, when they

certainly knew, that they possessed no such power?

ADMITTING, however, this palpable absurdity, is it possible, that they should expect any good from this profession, after they had made the experiment, and had in every instance failed? For, in this case, they must have failed in every instance. What could they expect, what could they receive, but uniform contempt, and entire infamy?

It is in vain, here, to assert, that there have been parallel instances. Until Infidels shall produce at least one parallel instance, it may be confidently asserted, that none has existed. As to those, which they have hitherto alledged, they ought to blush whenever they recollect them; for, it is presumed, that, with all the extravagant and singular prejudices, manifested by them against Christianity, they cannot but see, both from the nature, and the publicity, of the miracles of the Gospel, an entire and irreconcilable difference between their own workers of miracles, and the Apostles.

In the future world, the Apostles, if deceivers, could certainly expect no good. In this case, they cannot be supposed to have believed in either the character, or the declarations, of CHRIST. All his promises to them of future and eternal happiness, if he be supposed to have made any, must, in

their view, have been idle tales. Hence, if they expected any good in the future world, they must have expected it, merely as the reward of their deception. But can it be imagined, that any man could expect future, everlasting happiness, especially in that future world, and from the hands of that God, whom they have described, as the reward of a lye, or rather of a life spent in lying? Can a Jew have formed such expectations, with the Old-Testament in his hands? Above all, can those men have formed such expectations, who forbade *to do any evil, that any good might come*, on pain of damnation; and who declared, that *whosoever loveth or maketh a lye shall be cut off from all future good*?

It is unnecessary to add any thing, under this head, further than to observe, that arguments of this nature are allowed, by Mr. Hume himself, to have the same force with those, which are founded on natural causes. In his Essay on Liberty and Necessity, he observes---“When we consider how aptly natural and moral evidence link together, and form only one chain of argument, we shall make no scruple to allow, that they are of the same nature, and are derived from the same principles.”

3. It is incredible that wicked men, such as impostors of course are, should have

aimed at the objects, visibly aimed at, throughout the New-Testament.

THE whole end singly aimed at in the New-Testament, is manifestly to make mankind virtuous. The History, Doctrines, Precepts, and Ordinances, unitedly urge men to nothing, but piety to God, a reasonable government of themselves, and justice and benevolence to each other. Can an impostor be imagined to aim at this end? On what grounds, can he be supposed to labor, for this purpose, through a life, encircled with daily and extreme distress, and voluntarily, and with undoubting prescience, to meet a violent and ignominious death? I leave to infidels to explain the mystery, to unfold the principles, and to reconcile the purpose with the character.

4th. THE Apostles lived so as no deceiver ever lived.

THE Apostles not only appear to have been virtuous men, but have been generally acknowledged fairly to claim high distinction, in the list of the virtuous. To establish this distinction nothing more is necessary, than to compare them with Philosophers in general, particularly with Infidel Philosophers. Let them be compared, for instance, with Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, and Roussseau, and there will be found not a near resemblance, but, in most

respects, a striking contrast. Nor are they totally superiour to Infidels alone; but to men of virtue and piety. In the most exact, sublime, refined, and enduring virtue, they stand alone; and very remote from any rival. How is such a character to be reconciled with a life of imposture?

5. An imposition committed to so many persons could not have escaped detection.

THE number of the Apostles, including Matthias and Paul, was thirteen, and that of their coadjutors, though unknown, was evidently much greater. Seventy were commissioned, as preachers, by CHRIST; and many more by the Apostles. Perhaps there never was any plot committed to such a number of persons, without detection; even where it respected a single action, existed for a little period, and was not extorted by any distressing acts of violence. But here the secret, if we suppose a secret to have existed, was a design, the most complex, and the most extensive, which ever entered into the human mind; and the prosecution of it was extended through life and embittered with opposition, hatred, want, and infamy. Yet no one of the number ever discovered it, although they had frequent and zealous contentions, and although none gained, and all suffered by the concealment. Not a hint of this nature is given, nor a suspicion warranted, by the

whole testimony of antiquity. Would an opinion fraught with such incredibility, as attends that, which is here combated, be admitted, or even suggested on any other subject?

AT the same time, it is to be remembered, that their understanding, and information, in human policy was too confined, to allow of such concealment, even if, in other circumstances, it had been possible.---- They were all plain men; like the farmers and mechanics of this country; only far less informed. Such men, limited wholly and of necessity, to their own narrow circle of business, to provide subsistence for themselves and their families, cannot be believed, in that business, to have imbibed so profound a policy, or arts of such complete and sagacious imposition.

FROM these arguments it appears incredible, that the Apostles were deceivers. It may, however, not be improper to suggest the following reasons to prove, that they were neither deceivers, nor deceived.

1st. They published the prophecy of CHRIST, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, several years, before that event took place.

THE three first Gospels, in which that event is predicted, were published as early, at least as the year sixty-four; and Jerusa-

Jerusalem was taken, by Titus, on the eighth of September, in the year seventy. This prophecy contains so minute and explicit a description of the event, under consideration, with regard to persons, time, and circumstances, as to exclude the possibility of any material mistake. The Evangelists, therefore, in giving this prediction to mankind, put their Master's character, and their own together with the whole Christian cause, on the issue. If the prediction were not exactly fulfilled, all fell at once. This they could not but know; and plainly, therefore, could not, unless they fully believed the prediction, have published it to the world. But, if they were deceivers, they could not have believed it. The consequence is obvious, and undeniable.

THAT they were not deceived, with regard either to the prediction, or the character of CHRIST, is, with like evidence, proved by the fulfilment of the prediction: a fulfilment so exact, and entire, as to remove every doubt; especially when it is remembered, that the Historian, who, from his own knowledge and presence, has confirmed this truth, was a Pharisee.

2d. THIS proposition is evidenced by their total inability, of themselves, to form, and to fill up such a character, as that of JESUS CHRIST.

To form a perfect character, and to fill it up with such traits, as to make it appear like a real, living, acting being, or like one, who has really lived, and acted, in the world, and to give it proper and characteristical sentiments and manners, is perhaps, as hard a task, as was ever undertaken by the human genius. Virgil, one of the greatest geniuses, and one of the wisest men, of Heathen antiquity, has attempted it, in his *Eneas*.---With his success this Audience are sufficiently acquainted. *Eneas*, in the hands of this great master of fine writing, is not only a spiritless and unamiable person, but is enlivened, throughout, with grossness and immorality. The Heathens, indeed, have not, in their poetry, exhibited one amiable character, because, as is justly observed by the Author of the *Rambler*, they were unacquainted with Revelation. They had no virtuous models, from which to copy; and like other men, were wholly unable to form such a character by mere imagination. --- Their morals were so gross and their conceptions of virtue so imperfect, that the proper features of such a character appear not to have entered their conception.

BUT what Virgil could not perform each of the four Evangelists has in the most finished manner performed. The character of JESUS CHRIST is wholly that of a real, living, acting person; as distinct as that of

Hamlet, or Achilles. At the same time, it is a character of finished perfection. All the parts of it are suited entirely to each other, and, united, constitute, beyond comparison, the fairest image of pure, uniform and exalted virtue, which ever entered into the human mind. The piety, the benevolence, the wisdom, the integrity, the loveliness, of the Redeemer have had no rival, no second, even in the highest efforts of the noblest imagination. His Doctrines visibly excel all other doctrines; his precepts triumph over all other moral rules; and his conduct leaves out of comparison every human example. Notwithstanding the best and wisest of mankind have laboriously imbibed his wisdom, and studiously formed themselves by his precepts, he still stands alone; the meridian sun, in whose presence every little luminary "hides its diminished head."

ON this subject, there is no dispute; as there can be no doubt. Almost all the wise men, who have lived, since the Christian æra, and all the virtuous, have united in this sentiment; and far more of such men than the whole earth has produced besides, have diligently studied the books, in which the History of this glorious person is contained; and they have, with one voice, agreed, that the wisdom manifested in them is from Heaven, and that the Author of it is the SON OF GOD. In the meantime, his

instructions and character have wrought in the world, the greatest change, which it has ever experienced, and become the source of almost all the just, moral sentiments, and amiable moral conduct, which have existed, since this History was first published, in the Gospel. The excellence and preeminence of his Character is, therefore, fully established, and has been acknowledged by many Infidels, beside Rousseau.

COULD such a character be the result either of enthusiasm, or of deceit? Whence had the Apostles such ideas? How were mechanics and fishermen enabled to accomplish what none of the human race, beside them, has ever accomplished? Can we suppose the fishermen of Judea to have been so totally superiour not only to the fishermen, but to all the wise and learned men, of every other country?

3d. If we allow this absurdity to have existed, we shall still be wholly unable to account for their forming such a Character, as that of CHRIST.

THE Apostles have given us the Character of the Messiah. This Person they, with their whole nation, expected to appear, in circumstances of the highest temporal grandeur and dignity. With this preconception firmly riveted, the Apostles cannot be supposed to have departed, without some

adequate cause, from all their preceding ideas of this splendid Personage, and to have formed a character of him so greatly reversed, as that, which they have actually formed. Nor can any cause be conceived to be an adequate one, unless of equal magnitude with that, which themselves have left upon record. Nothing, less than the evidence of their own eyes and ears, will account for this fact. They must have thoroughly known the person, to be able to describe the character, and by irresistible conviction have been forced to renounce all their former prejudices, to be willing.

4th. THE truth of the Apostles testimony is evinced by the attestations of their Enemies to the principal facts, which they record.

THE testimony of Judas to the whole character of CHRIST, especially his moral character, may be fairly esteemed decisive.

JUDAS had every advantage for knowing the whole character and conduct of CHRIST, and every conceivable temptation to publish whatever was defective in it. If he preached not the wisdom, if he wrought not the miracles, if he practised not the virtues, professed by himself, and attributed to him by others, Judas could not have been ignorant of the failure, nor have neglected to

publish the imposition. But, while his temptations operated in the highest degree, he has not only accused him of nothing, and directly declared him innocent; but by accomplishing, at this trying period, his own death, has given the clearest proof that, in his view, CHRIST was what he professed to be; a preacher of truth, a perfect example of holiness, the author of the most wonderful miracles, and, in a word, the SON OF GOD.

THE Jews were generally most bitter enemies to CHRIST. His miracles and life were exhibited to them daily, in such a manner, as to enable them competently to judge, of both. If it could have been done with a shadow of pretence, they must therefore, have denied his miracles, and aspersed his character. A few instances of such aspersion are recorded in the Gospel; I need not mention how groundless, or how contemptible. Similar aspersions, if possible more groundless, and more contemptible, are handed down in the || Mishna, and in the Talmud. Generally they dared not to call his character at all in question, until long after the establishment of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire; as I shall soon evince, by a passage from Origen,

|| Mishna, a Collection of Jewish traditions made by Rabbi J. kuda, about the year one hundred and eighty:—Talmud a Commentary on the Mishna. There are two Talmuds, the Jerusalem Talmud, and the Babylonian.

which I conceive fairly to decide this question. His miracles they denied neither in the Gospels, nor in the Mishna and Talmud ; but acknowledged their existence fully ; attributing them, in the one, to a concert with Belzebub, and, in the other to magic, which they assert him to have learned in Egypt. In the mean time, these last mentioned books, written with the most malignant opposition to Christianity, give attestation to the existence of CHRIST, as the Author of a new Religion, and as a Worker of miracles ; to the state of the Jews, as described in the Gospels ; to his Disciples, as having followed him, and wrought miracles in his name ; to the destruction of Jerusalem ; to the rise, and the prevalence, of Christianity ; and to the constancy of the Christians, in its early periods.

AMONG the Heathens, whose hatred to Christianity needs not to be specified (beside the testimony asserted, by Justin Martyr and Tertullian, to be contained in the Acts of Pilate, the existence and authenticity of which cannot, it is presumed, be fairly disputed) Tacitus, the Roman Historian whose character, as a writer, requires no remarks, and who flourished about the year one hundred, thirty-six years after the Gospels of Mathew and Mark, were written, declares the time, name, country, and character, of CHRIST, as the Author of the

Christian Religion ; bears witness to his trial, and death under Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, and to the expectation of the Messiah by the Jews ; and records the destruction of Jerusalem, together with the principal events which attended it ; the great numbers of Christians, at this early period existing in Rome, Judea, and other places ; and the terrible persecution of them, by Nero.

THE same things, generally, are testified by Sulpicius, Anno four hundred.

THE banishment of the Jews, from Rome, by Claudius, is asserted by Suctonius, Anno one hundred and ten ; as is also the destruction of Jerusalem.

THE Emperors Trajan, Anno one hundred and seven, and Adrian, Anno one hundred and seventeen, testify several interesting things concerning the Christians ; particularly their great numbers, innocence, and constancy.

PLINY, Anno one hundred and seven, beside the things just mentioned, informs us, that the Christians steadfastly opposed Idolatry ; worshipped, in Assemblies, on the Lord's day ; sung hymns to CHRIST, as a GOD ; held agapæ, or feasts of charity ; had church officers ; and engaged, by oath to commit neither theft, robbery, nor adul-

tery, nor ever to falsify their word, nor to betray any trust.

CELSUS, the famous Epicurean philosopher and bitter champion for Heathenism against Christianity, Anno one hundred and seventy six, one hundred and thirteen years after the first written Gospel, testifies beside the things already mentioned, that there were books, written by the Disciples of CHRIST, containing an account of his life and actions, his own discourses and words; particularly several predictions of his; his Name Logos, or the Word of God; his genealogy, and that of Mary, his mother. He further testifies, that he was born of a Virgin, and was reputed to be the son of a Carpenter; that the Chaldeans were reported to have come, and worshipped him, when he was an infant; that Herod the Tetrarch, being informed of this, ordered all, who had been born in that village, about that time, to be killed, intending to kill him, lest he should afterwards take the government; that he was carried into Egypt, lest he should be killed; that Angels were sent, on his account; that he was baptized by John; that the Holy Ghost descended on him, in the shape of a Dove; that a voice from Heaven, declared him to be the Son of God; that he was very poor; went about from place to place; took to himself ten or eleven, abjects, or low people; healed diseases; and

raised the dead ; fed multitudes with a few loaves, of which large fragments were left ; was called a Nazaræan ; represented himself as sent to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance ; forbade the anxious pursuit of riches ; exposed the difficulty of obtaining immortal life by the rich ; was called upon to shew a sign in the temple ; was deserted, denied, and betrayed, by his companions ; was derided, clad in a purple robe, crowned with thorns, had a reed put into his hands, thirsted, and had gall and vinegar given to him ; that blood flowed from his side ; that he died a shameful death, and was reviled at his death ; that he foreknew, and foretold his sufferings ; rose again from the dead ; shewed himself to a woman, and to several others ; shewed the marks of the nails ; breathed on his Disciples ; was the first Author of the Christian persuasion ; taught the doctrine but a few years before Celsus wrote ; was at that time esteemed superior to Angels, reckoned to be the SON OF GOD, and called a God ; and that one Angel, and, in another place, two, were said to appear at the sepulchre of JESUS. Celsus, also, testifies further that the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, and of a future, Immortal Life, founded on the life, death, and preaching, of Christ, was recorded by his Disciples ; that many Jews believed on him, and forsook the worship of their own country ; that his followers were, at first, ~~four~~ in num-

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ber, and of one mind ; that they afterwards became numerous, spread abroad, and were divided in opinion ; that they customarily met together, in assemblies, and there taught things agreeable to their sentiments ; that they were forbidden to partake in idol-feasts, and refused to join in idol-worship ; and that the Jews were punished for the crucifixion of JESUS.

JULIAN, who was possessed of most of the learning of his age, who had the education of a Christian, and the malice of an Apostate, and whose testimony, therefore, will not be suspected, declares that CHRIST was born, in the reign of Augustus, and at the time of taxing, or enrolment, made by Cyrenius, or Quirinus ; that the Christian Religion arose, in the time of Tiberius, and Claudius ; that the Historical books of the New-Testament were genuine, and authentic ; that they were the only Historical books, acknowledged, as of sacred authority, by the Christians, and the only authentic memoirs of CHRIST, and his Apostles ; that the Gospels were written as early, as is generally believed ; and particularly, that John's, the last, was written, soon after the death of Peter and Paul. He also testifies, that CHRIST cured the blind, the lame, and the possessed, rebuked the winds, and walked on the waves ; that there were multitudes of Christians in Greece, and in Italy, before John wrote his Gospel ;

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that, beside persons in humble life, Cornelius and Sergius Paulus were Christians ; and that Peter and Paul were the great preachers of Christianity.*

THE testimonies of Porphyry and Hierocles are also, in several respects, of considerable value. It is greatly to be regretted, that so small a part of their works, especially of those of Porphyry, is now remaining. From the scope of them, so far as we are informed, they would have furnished a highly interesting testimony to the Scriptures. A minute account of their remaining testimony cannot now be given ; but it ought to be observed, that they, together with Celsus and Julian, acknowledge the genuineness and authenticity of these books ; and miserably evade the force of the argument, from the miracles of CHRIST and his Apostles, by attributing them to magic.

THERE are, also, still remaining, many other useful Heathen testimonies, which cannot now be particularly mentioned.

FROM those, which have been mentioned, the conclusion appears to be fairly drawn, that the Apostles have given a true testimony to Mankind. From Celsus, ef-

* Julian aimed to overthrow the Christian Religion, but has confirmed it. His arguments against it are perfectly harmless, and insufficient to unsettle the weakest Christian.

pecially, do we derive decisive evidence of this truth. It is not here designed to represent this Philosopher, as receiving the things, in the manner, in which we receive them. In this case, he must have been a Christian. But he considered them, as the acknowledged representations of the Evangelists, eye and ear witnesses of the things which they declare ; representations, in his own time, universally received by Christians, and never impeached. It ought, however, to be here observed, that Origen declares Celsus to have, by insinuation, aspersed, in some degree, the character of CHRIST, though with nothing infamous ; and to have been the only person, of whom himself had ever heard, as having aspersed him at all. This declaration of Origen may be esteemed a full proof of the perfect spotlessness of CHRIST'S Character, from his death to the time of Celsus : for Origen could not but know, and has undoubtedly declared, the truth.

5th. THE truth of the Apostles, testimony is proved in a peculiar manner, by several important institutions, and memorials of interesting facts, which they have recorded. These institutions and memorials are,

1st. Baptism, introduced in the room of Circumcision :

2d. The Lord's Supper, instead of the Passover :

3d. The First-day Sabbath, instead of the Seventh day Sabbath :

4th. The Christian-worship, instead of the Temple-worship :

5. The Christian Church, instead of the Jewish :

6th. Invocation of CHRIST, as GOD ; and also Invocation in his Name.

ON these it is to be observed generally, that the first Christians, among whom these institutions and memorials were originally established, were Jews, and were also numerous ; as the New-Testament, and Heathen, Jewish and Christian Antiquity unitedly declares. By Jews, therefore, they were first received. This being premised, I would further observe,

1st. THESE Jewish institutions were established in the Law of Moses, acknowledged by all the Jews, by the Apostles, and by CHRIST himself, to be the Word of GOD ; and were, therefore, of unquestioned, divine authority.

2d. THEY were sanctioned by the example of their prophets, priests, and kings ; and by a National adherence of many cen-

turies; even from the commencement of their National existence, to the time of the Apostles Mission.

3d. THEY were sanctioned by the penal laws of Moses; so that to fail of the commanded adherence to them was punished with excision.

4th. THEY were sanctioned by CHRIST'S uniform observance of them, and by that of his Apostles.

5th. THEY were established in the minds of the Jews, by pride and bigotry, in the extreme.

6th. THEY, with the rest of the Mosaic system, were universally considered, by the Jews, of that age, as designed to be perpetual.

BUT notwithstanding all these high sanctions, and the unprecedented attachment of the Jews to these institutions, as the means of personal, and national distinction, the Christian institutions above mentioned were introduced in their place, and to their annihilation.

IN the year forty nine, or fifty, the whole Church at Jerusalem, consisting of the Apostles, Elders, and Brethren, decreed, that the Gentiles, whose membership in the Jewish Church, when proselyted, had be-

fore depended, equally with that of the Jews themselves, on an exact conformity to these Mosaic institutions, should not be under any obligation to observe them. This event may be considered as the annihilation of these institutions, in the Christian Church; for, though the Nazaræan Christians appear with some others, to have continued Jewish observances, after this period, yet a blow was then given to them, from which they never recovered. Many of the Jews appear to have totally neglected them, from this period, and, in spite of their former most bigoted adherence, to have viewed them as done away.

ON what principles can we account for this singular event? The Mosaic Institutions were considered by all Christians, as being of divine authority; and were publicly asserted to be so, by the Apostles, and by their Master. Could others be introduced into their place, which were not acknowledged to be of at least equal authority?

BAPTISM and the Lord's Supper were professed to be memorials of CHRIST'S Death and of the cleansing of sin, by the effusion of his blood, declared to have been shed publicly, at Jerusalem, and on the feast of the Passover, by the Roman Government, and the Jewish Sanhedrim. Is it possible, that CHRIST should not have been known thus to have poured out his blood; or that his

sufferings should have been thus commemorated by those, who being constantly appealed to, as eye witnesses of his death, yet did not know, that he had thus died ?

THE First day Sabbath was instituted, immediately after the day of Pentecost, as a memorial of CHRIST'S Resurrection from the dead. Could Jews be supposed to unite in observing this institution, upon such an appeal, if CHRIST had not been on the best grounds believed to have risen ; and if circumstances, less extraordinary than those alledged, had accompanied his Death and resurrection ; or if either were less convincingly attested, than is asserted in the Gospel ?

Is it possible, that the Apostles could be even listened to, when proposing a Form of worship, new, entirely different from the splendid ritual of the Temple ; a Form of worship, of which the Aaronic Priesthood, sacrifices, and purifications, were no part ; and in which all men were placed upon a level with the Jews, all places made equally sacred with the Temple, and all persons with the Priests ; a Form of worship, in which universal humbleness and spirituality were substituted in the room of unequalled pomp, and of services rendered venerable and affecting by the most forcible exhibitions to sense and imagination ; unless CHRIST had been certainly known to have

and/

appeared, with proofs of a character, not equal only, but superiour to that of Moses, and of an authority, fairly qualifying him to change what GOD himself was confessed to have once established ?

THE same observations are, with the same force, applicable to the substitution of the Christian Church in the place of the Jewish.

COULD the Invocation of the name of JESUS CHRIST, which, from Acts 7. 56. is proved to have existed, and from 1 Cor. 1. 1. 2. Acts 9. 14, 20, 21. and from various other passages, is proved to have existed so extensively, as to become a designation of Christians in general, have been adopted even by the Apostles themselves, and, much more, by other Jews, unless facts, as extraordinary as those recorded in the Gospels, had evidenced his character and mission, and proved him to be the SON of GOD, sent into this world to establish a new and perfect Religion, and to accomplish the Salvation of mankind ?

ALL these institutions were professedly built on facts, publicly appealed to, and wholly uncontradicted, for ages ; facts of the most singular nature, and of the highest conceivable importance ; facts, professed to have existed as proofs of a most wonderful Mission of the most wonderful Person, ever heard of in this world. The adoption

of these institutions, therefore, by those among whom these facts were declared to have existed, and who were appealed to as eye and ear witnesses of their existence, while these facts were alledged, as the obligatory and only reasons for such adoption, appears to be an unanswerable proof, that the facts themselves existed, and of course that the Apostles have given a true testimony concerning them. At the same time, the adoption of them by Jews, so circumstanced, and directly charged with being the enemies, and, in some sense, the murderers, of the Person who was thus commemorated and honoured, a Person who appeared always in the humblest life, and in a character so opposite to that of their expected Messiah, adds such a degree of weight to this evidence, as, one would imagine, must, if it were possible, even silence gainsaying.

6th. THE only remaining proof of this point, which I shall now mention, is the apparent Integrity of the Narration itself; and this, because it is so obvious, and so generally and easily understood, I shall consider in a summary manner.

THE Integrity of this Narration appears in the first place, in the frank manner, in which the writers record the low condition of their Master, the contempt and opposition, with which he met from the Jewish

(in) Government and Nation, his sufferings and death, and the ignomy, with which it was attended. Nothing was ever more unlike design, than this account, considered in all its parts.

2d. IN the like frank exhibition of their own humble state and character, their errors and faults, their prejudices and debates, and the numerous instances in which they deservedly received reproof from the mouth of CHRIST.

3d. IN the peculiar simplicity and impartiality, with which they record facts:--- Their Narrations are mere narrations of facts, whether favorable or unfavorable to their cause. In neither case do they utter a comment, unless for mere explanation. There is no opinion pronounced, a single instance excepted; no praise given by them to CHRIST; no blame charged upon his enemies; no expression of wonder at his miracles, nor of abhorrence, at the injustice of his murderers; nothing aggravated; nothing diminished; and, in a word, no appearance of those feelings, which could not but be excited by the events, which they relate. On the contrary, they appear to have sacrificed every human feeling to the cause of Truth, and to the obligations of Duty.

4th. IN the entire harmony, which reigns throughout their writings. They wrote, at

different times, and in different countries. The three first Evangelists appear never to have seen the Gospels of each other; and John wrote more properly a supplement to their Gospels, than a formal narrative of the Mission of CHRIST. That they wrote without any concert is certain from what they have written; and that their writings entirely harmonize was never denied, unless from the love of the denial. In time, place and circumstance, in the characters, conduct, and manners of those, whom they mention, there is an agreement, which cannot be paralleled. Had the Gospels been fabricated by imposition, such could not have been their character. Truth is always consistent; Falshood never. It is also to be observed, that all of them wrote several years, after the facts, which they have recorded, took place. Such an agreement is, therefore, high and convincing evidence of the truth of their testimony.

3d. THE testimony of the Apostles has been handed down to us, uncorrupted.--- This I will endeavour summarily to evince, in the following observations.

1st. THE passages quoted by the ancient Christian writers, and by the Heathen also, are generally quoted in the same words, and almost always have the same sense, which we find in passages now in the New-Testament.

A LARGE part of the New-Testament, and particularly of the Historical books, might be obtained from these writers, in the very words contained in our printed New-Testaments. This, it is evident, would have been impossible, had not all quoted from the same original writings.

IN many instances, however, their quotations are made in words differing, more or less, from those, which are acknowledged by us. On this subject it may be observed in the

1st. PLACE, that these writers often intentionally give only the sense of the passage, as they severally understand it. Of course, judging differently, as we do, they necessarily wrote their different interpretations, in terms somewhat differing. Most of the acknowledged terms are frequently ~~preferred~~ ^{serv/} preferred; although in the instances now referred to, they are preserved rather to express the meaning happily, than to accord exactly with the words of the Scriptural writers.

2d. HENCE they differ, not unfrequently, from each other, in the terms which they use, although generally and easily reconcilable in the meaning. As this is done by those, who visibly used, and acknowledged, the same Scriptures, and har-

monized in their theological sentiments, it is evident, that their differences sprung from the source, to which it is here attributed.

3d. As they knew, that those, to whom, and those, for whom, they wrote, had the New-Testament, as well as themselves, and as the *Authenticity of these books was not then called in question, they quoted securely, from memory knowing, that, if they made any mistakes, their readers, as well as their correspondents, could easily correct them.

THESE quotations are often made merely to illustrate a doctrine, or to enforce an exhortation, reproof, or consolation; and hence cannot be expected to possess verbal exactness; it being unnecessary to the purpose in hand,

4th. AMONG those who thus quoted, some were of more, and some of less accurate characters; and hence they quoted more or less exactly.

5th. THEIR own works, having passed through the hands of many transcribers, are now doubtless less exact, in this respect, than they originally were; so that we may well be surpris'd to find their differences so few, and so small.

* The Authenticity of the New-Testament at large was never called in question, until the sixteenth Century.

6th. STILL they are of trifling importance, and such as do not materially affect a single doctrine, or fact.

PERHAPS it may be thought that most of those, which are here called quotations, ought rather to be termed references. I have used the term quotations, because it has appeared to me, that the writers aimed to quote, but did it imperfectly, for the reasons which are suggested.

ON this subject, it ought further to be mentioned, that many of these writers differed much in opinion, and disputed warmly, concerning several doctrines of high importance. We may, therefore, well be astonished, that the writers, of almost all sects, should so far agree in their quotations. So general was this agreement, to the time of Origen, that, though possessed of more information, concerning this subject, than any, perhaps than all men living, he had never heard of any person (Marcion, his followers, the Valentinians, and perhaps Leucius, excepted) who had corrupted the Scriptures.

NOR ought it to be here forgotten, that these very differences are a standing proof, that there was not the least concert among Catholics, or Heretics, with respect to this matter, nor any design formed, or even thought of, to impose these books on the

belief of mankind. On the contrary, they plainly considered the books, as standing firmly on their own evidence; and left men to receive, or to reject them, as they should think proper.

2d. THE singular reverence, with which the ancient Christians regarded the Scriptures, forbids even a suspicion, that they wilfully corrupted them.

Of this reverence some notice has been already taken. A few additional observations may however be advantageously made.

THE Scriptures are now in every hand, are used as a school-book, quoted in ordinary conversation, and are questioned, opposed, and ridiculed by Infidels. Hence good men, although not at all shaken in their faith by these means, appear yet to regard these writings with less profound veneration, than is observable in the ancient Christians. By them the Scriptures were viewed with some such reverence, as would naturally be rendered to GOD himself, manifested in this world, with glory becoming his Character. * A remarkable specimen of this reverence, in the members of an ancient Church, is recorded in a letter, from St. Austin to St. Jerom, Jerom translated the Old-Testament. The Bishop of

^{Tw}
* See Nevell's Boyl. Lect.,

the Church mentioned, used this translation, in divine service. In the prophecy of Jonah, Jerom had rendered the Hebrew word, translated *Gourd*, by the Latin word *Hædera*. In the former Latin translation, originally used in this Church, the same Hebrew word was rendered by the Latin word *Cucurbita*. When the Bishop read the passage, the people, perceiving the word changed, were alarmed, and would have finally left the Bishop, if he had not consented to restore the original word. Such was their watchfulness, and jealousy, for the preservation of the purity of the Scriptures, even where no fact, doctrine, or precept, was materially concerned.

SITUATED among persons of such a character, few men would dare to misquote, or corrupt; and few would be inclined to do it, if they dared. Such corruptions also as existed, would be immediately detected, and regarded with the utmost detestation. Thus the corruptions of Marcion were founded throughout the Christian church, and his name consigned, for his villainy and impudence, to perpetual infamy.

3d. THE Christian sects were numerous; and each watched over the conduct of the others, with a careful, jealous, and prying attention.

If there were at any time, an especial temptation wilfully to misquote the

Scriptures, we easily see, that it would peculiarly respect those passages which were the favorite ones of particular sects, and which were supposed most to befriend their characteristical opinions; but we also see that these would, by each sect, be watched with an eagle eye, and a continual apprehensiveness of danger. Hence arose an extreme difficulty in accomplishing a design of this nature, even if it were formed: a difficulty, greatly increased by the warmth of strenuous controversy, and by the desire, and the pride, of victory.

THESE considerations will furnish us with an easy and sufficient explanation of a fact, otherwise very difficult to be explained; viz. the general and surprising agreement among so many persons thus differing and thus contending, found in their quotations of the Scriptures.

4th. THE very great number and diffusion of the copies of the New-Testament, rendered such corruption, in any great degree, evidently impossible.

COPIES of this volume were, at an early period numerous in Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Macedonia, Africa proper, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor, Armenia and Persia. The general, apparent agreement of these copies is a demonstration, that ve-

fy little corruption has ever taken place in these books.

5th. THE New-Testament was early translated into several languages.

THE Old Latin translation was made most probably in the first * or very early in the second Century. Tertullian expressly declares, that there was a Latin Version of the Gospels and Epistles existing in his time.

JEROME'S Version was done in the fourth Century, and with great care, learning, and exactness :

THE First Syriac probably in the Fourth :

THE Second Syriac, and the Armenian, in the Fifth : and

THE Coptic in the Sixth Century.

ST. AUSTIN declares, that all attempts to corrupt the Scriptures were in vain, because they were then translated into so many languages ; were in the hands of people of every age and character ; and were so known, so esteemed, and so celebrated.

* Michaelis affirms that no man of learning, Dr. Mill excepted, denies this Version to have been done in the first Century. See Travis's Letters to Gibbon ; from which this account of the Versions here mentioned is taken.

Anno Dom. three hundred and ninety-five.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM also declares, Anno Dom. three hundred and ninety-eight, that they were, in his time, already rendered in the languages of Britain, Syria, Egypt, Persia, and India: and in the languages of all people in general, whether barbarians, or others.

It may, perhaps, be both agreeable and useful, in this place to recite a passage from Theodoret, in which he refers to this subject. Anno Dom. four hundred and twenty three.

“ I WILL compare the most celebrated law-givers of the Greeks with our Fishermen, Publicans, and Tent-makers; and shew the difference between them. The Laws of the former were forgotten, soon after the death of those, who enacted them, but the laws delivered by Fishermen have flourished, and prevailed, and have been received, not only by Greeks, and Romans, but also by Scythians, Persians and other Barbarians. The Heralds of truth were not, indeed, masters of the Greek eloquence; but, filled with wisdom, they have carried the divine doctrine to all nations, and have filled the whole world with writings, containing instructions concerning religion and virtue. All men, leaving the dreams and speculations of Philoso-

c/
 phers, now nourish themselves with the doctrines of Fishermen and Publicans, and study the writings of a Tent-maker. The seven Wise men of Greece are forgotten; nor do the Greeks themselves certainly know their names; but Mathew, Bartholomew, and James, Moses, David, and Isaiah, with the other Prophets and Apostles, are known to all men, as well as the names of their own children. Whom did Xenophanes, Parmenides, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, or Speusippus leave as their successors in Philosophy? What city follows the Laws of Plato's Republic? You can shew none who now teach those doctrines; but we can shew the power of the prophetic and Apostolical doctrines; for the whole earth is filled with their words."

"THE Hebrew writings (of the Old and New-Testament) are translated not only into Greek, but into the Latin, Egyptian, Persian, Indian, Armenian, Scythian, and Samaritan; in a word, into all the languages used by the nations. Our Fishermen, Publicans, and Tent-makers, have persuaded not only Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, but all nations of the earth. Nor are our doctrines understood by those, only, who preside in the Churches, but by smiths, wool-combers, taylor, and artificers of all sorts, by women, and maid-servants. Nor do those only, who dwell in cities, but the country people, also, understand, and are

able to discourse concerning our doctrines; they practise virtue, and shun vicious actions.” c/

“ God had before tried other methods. He taught all men by the wonderful frame of the universe. The Jews he reclaimed by the Law and the Prophets. But a more effectual remedy was wanting; and experience has shown the benefit of it. The whole world has now been enlightened, and idolatry abolished. Greeks, Romans, Barbarians, acknowledge a crucified Saviour.”

“ COMPARE these Fishermen and Publicans with the Greek and Roman Law-givers. You will find, that those Law-givers could not persuade even their own neighbours to live according to their laws; but these Galilæans have persuaded not only Greeks and Romans to embrace the Law, and the Doctrine of the Gospel, but the subjects of the Roman Empire in general, together with Scythians, Sarmatians, Indians, Ethiopians, Persians, Britons, and Germans. Indeed they have brought all nations, and men of all sorts, to receive the Laws of a crucified man; and that not by arms, soldiers, or Persian violence, but by reasonings and arguments, shewing the usefulness of those Laws. People, whom Augustus and the whole power of the Roman Empire could not induce to receive their g

laws, venerate the writings of Peter, Paul, John, Mathew, Luke and Mark, as if they had been sent down from Heaven.”

6th. THESE books were also publicly read, in all the Christian Assemblies, throughout the world.

THIS practice began, when the books were just received by the Christian Churches. * Paul laid the Pastors of the Church at Thessalonica under *an oath to cause his first Epistle to that Church to be read to all the holy Brethren*, and directed the Colossians both *to read the Epistle from Laodicea*, and to cause the Epistle to the Colossians *to be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans*. And with an immediate view to this purpose, several of the Epistles appear to have been inscribed; one *to the Churches of Galatia*; another *To the Church of Corinth, and to all them, who, in every place, call upon the name of JESUS CHRIST*.

THIS practice of publicly reading the Scriptures, originated by Moses, and sanctioned by Apostolic authority, has continued to the present day. When we consider the character of those, before whom they were read, men who so revered them as to be ready to lay down their lives for them, who proportionally studied them, and who

* See Dr. Macknight's New Translation of the Epistles, Part. Essays. 2.

were to the last degree jealous of their purity, we cannot but see the corruption of them, even in one instance, rendered, by this practice, extremely difficult. Beyond all computation must the difficulty be increased of corrupting them so generally, as to produce any important effect. To induce so many persons, so remote in place, differing so much in character and opinion, and agreeing so entirely in the highest reverence for the Scriptures, to consent to any supposable set of corruptions, or to impose such corruptions generally on a body of men so circumstanced, must have been too evident an impossibility, to be seriously undertaken by any man, or men, however visionary or wicked.

7th. THE number of Manuscripts of the New-Testament, at present, or lately existing, is very considerable; and these so generally agree, as to forbid all apprehensions, that these books have been materially corrupted.

AN accurate account of the Manuscripts of the New-Testament cannot be expected from one, who is both removed from the places of their existence, and unpossessed of such books, as contain a just exhibition of their number and character. At the same time, the following observations cannot be unacceptable to this audience.

1st. THE * Alexandrian MS is unquestionably of very great antiquity. This MS was given by Cyril Lucaris, Patriarch of Alexandria, when translated to the see of Constantinople, to Sir Thomas Roe, the British Embassador at the Porte, Anno Dom. sixteen hundred twenty eight, and was declared by the Patriarch to have been written early in the Fourth Century, by Thecla, a noble Egyptian Lady. By Dr. Grabe who has published a particular account of it, it is believed to have been written in the fourth, and by others in the fifth Century.

THIS MS. contains all the Canonical books of both Testaments, and a catalogue of them all. It contains also several books of the Apocrapha, and a few other writings of the like character; such as the ~~old~~ ancient Christians esteemed useful, and read at times, in their public assemblies: as we sometimes read the sermons of eminent Divines in ours. There is not, as has been already observed, in all antiquity, the least evidence, that any writings, but those now esteemed Canonical, were ever so esteemed. On the contrary all others are placed in a totally different list and Character. Yet many books of the fathers were, and very justly, accounted useful and edifying.

* Lardner Vol .5.

† 2d. THE New-Testaments of Erasmus, Robert Stephens, Beza, and the Editors of *Computum*, were collated with a great number of MSS; and with a care and integrity which generally does the Editors the highest honour.

† 3d. THAT of Wetstein was formed from a consultation of sixty five MSS. All of them did not, however, contain the whole New-Testament.

|| 4th. THERE are now remaining in public and private libraries, in Europe, more MSS. of the New-Testament, of different ages, than of any other ancient writings whatever. Many of these are of great antiquity.

THESE MSS. may be considered, as having, by their general agreement, decided this question; and as proving the opinion of St. Augustine to be just, that it was impossible materially to corrupt the Scriptures.

THUS have I finished the arguments, which I proposed to produce, in support of the Genuineness and Authenticity of the New-Testament.

† See Travis's Letters to Gibbon.

|| See Dr. Macknight's New translation of the Epistles Prel. Essays, 2.

No question, perhaps, can be of more importance to the divine Authority of the sacred Volume, than this. If its Genuineness and Authenticity be established, its Authority is also established.

IF there was such a person as JESUS CHRIST ; if he was so born ; if he so lived ; if he was so attested ; if he so preached, wrought miracles, died, rose from the dead, ascended to Heaven, commissioned his Apostles, and enabled them to preach, work miracles in his name, and erect his kingdom through the world, in the manner which they have related ; then he was the SON of GOD ; his Doctrines were true ; his Apostles were inspired ; and his Religion is of Divine Original, and of Divine Authority. Mankind are, of course, bound to receive, and obey it. Those, who reject it, reject it at their peril ; and those, who sincerely embrace it, are secured, beyond a hazard, in the certain future possession of its invaluable and immortal blessings.

* 1794. *

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