

H. Groot (Hug. de)

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HUGO GROTIUS

ON THE

Truth of Christianity;

IN SIX BOOKS:

**FAMILIARLY TRANSLATED INTO
ENGLISH,**

BY

SPENCER MADAN, Esq.

OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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now Rector of Woburn in Leicestershire.*

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C H A P. XV.

FROM THE VERACITY AND ANTIQUITY OF
MOSES.

THE writings of Moses, which record the miracles we have mentioned, have the fullest claim to our belief; not only from the uninterrupted tradition subsisting among the Hebrews, that the author himself was recommended and appointed to the people as a leader by the voice of the Lord; but also from the certain proofs which he afforded, that no selfish motive of ambition, no partial views of benefit to his family, could have actuated his conduct, that himself should have recorded, when he might have suppressed, his own faults and follies; and, while his own descendants are reduced to a level with the common Levites, that he should have assigned *to others* the dignity of the government and of the priesthood.—Hence, then, it must appear most plainly, that he could have no inducement to re-

cite a falſity : neither are the ſtile and language he makes uſe of, by any means ſuch as are in general practiſed to gain credit to impoſtures, highly coloured and alluring ; but ſimple and well adapted to the nature of the occaſion. An additional claim to our belief in the writings of Moſes, ariſes from their undoubted antiquity ; a point, which none other writing whatever can diſpute with them. Of this we have evidence from the Greeks, from whom other nations derived all learning, when they confeſs themſelves to have received certain letters of their language *from ſome other* ; which letters among them have the ſame order, the ſame name, and even the ſame old character with the Syriac or Hebrew. In like manner do the moſt ancient laws of Athens, whence alſo the Roman were afterwards ſelected, derive their origin from the laws of Moſes.

C H A P. XVI.

FROM THE TESTIMONIES OF FOREIGN WRITERS.

THE testimonies, moreover, of men, who differed altogether in religion from the Jews, may, in no inconsiderable number, be adduced to shew, that the very earliest traditions prevailing among all nations whatsoever, corresponded with the writings of Moses. The accounts left by that writer, in respect to the origin of the world, were also nearly the same in the oldest histories of the Phœnicians, collected by Sanchuniathon, and from him translated by Philo Byblius : partly also in those of the Indians and Ægyptians ; whence Linus, Hesiod, and many other Greeks, have made mention of *a chaos*, which others, again, have signified under the denomination of *an egg*. Very many writers, and, last of all, Ovid, who took it from the Greeks, have frequently treated of the formation of animals, and

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lastly of that of man, even after the Divine Likeness; as also, of the dominion which was given to man over all other animals. That all things were made by the word of God, is declared even by Epicharmus and the Platonists; and before their time, by that most ancient poet, who was the author, not of those hymns which are extant in that name, but of those verses to which antiquity hath given the appellation of the Carmen Orphicum, not as being the composition, but as containing the traditions of Orpheus. That the Sun is not a primitive and original light, but only a receptacle of light (the *Δοχημα και Οχημα τῆς Πυρος*, as an ancient Christian writer expresseth it) was even asserted by Empedocles: Aratus and Catullus pronounced the Divine habitation to be higher than the stars; and that therein is Light Perpetual we are taught by Homer. That before all things were, God *is*, as not being begotten of any; that the world is of beauty unparallelled, as being the work of God; and

and that darkness was prior to light, we are instructed by Thales, according to the ancient doctrine: the last article indeed, we even find mentioned in the Orphic verses, and in Hesiod; and thence the computation of time by nights was adopted by nations the most tenacious of old customs. Anaxagoras declares that all things were ordained by a *supreme mind*: Aratus, that the heavenly bodies were made by the Deity: Virgil, after the Greeks, that life proceeded from Divine Inspiration: Hesiod, Homer, and Callimachus, that man was formed from clay: and finally, it is asserted by Maximus Tyrius to be a tradition unanimously and universally accepted, that there is One Supreme God, the cause of all things. The completion of the work within seven days, was a circumstance recorded not only among the people of Greece and Italy, in the particular observance of the seventh day, as we learn from Josephus, from Philo, from Tibullus, from Clemens Alexandrinus, and from

from Lucian (while at the same time the Hebrew observance of it is universally well known) but also among the Celtæ and the Indians, who all established an hebdomadal division of time; as appears from Philostratus, from Dion Cassius, from Justin Martyr, as well as from the oldest periodical distinctions. We are even told by the Ægyptians, that the primitive state of man was a state of simplicity and of nakedness: and hence arose the golden age of the poets, which according to Strabo, was celebrated even among the Indians. Maimonides hath remarked, that the accounts of Adam, of Eve, of the tree and of the serpent, were in his time extant among the idolatrous Indians; and modern writers affirm also, that the same accounts are found among the inhabitants of Pegu, and the Calaminfamians*, a Pagan people of the same Indies: the name of Adam is also found among the Brachmans, and the

* Inhabitants of the Philippine islands.

computation of 6000 years from the foundation of the world, is made by the Siamefe. The ages of men immediately succeeding the first are recorded by Berosus of the Chaldæans, Manethos of the Ægyptians, Hiromus of the Phœnicians, Hestiaëus, Hecatæus, and Hellanicus of the Greeks, and by Hesiod among the poets, nearly to have reached 1000 years. Now this is the less incredible, since various historians, and particularly the Grecian Pausanias and Philostratus, and the Roman Pliny, have recorded, that the bodies of men in former times have been found, when their sepulchres were opened, to be of much larger size than those of modern days. Then again, it is related by Catullus, after many Grecian writers, that visions from heaven appeared occasionally unto men, before the frequency and greatness of their crimes had as it were excluded the Deity, and the spirits which minister unto Him, from all familiar intercourse with mankind. The savage state of giants, as mentioned by Moses, is almost

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universally spoken of by the Greek and Latin authors. Of the deluge it is observable, that the memory of man, in almost all countries, terminates in the history of that event: even in those countries which, after having long been totally unknown, were opened to the knowledge of the present day, by our more immediate predecessors: Whence Varro calls the whole of that period (*'Αδηλον*) the dark or unknown Age. Poets, it is true, in the right and freedom of fabulous representation, have greatly involved their accounts in obscurity: those accounts, however, were originally given upon authentic grounds; that is to say, agreeably to the Mosaic relation of them, by writers of the greatest antiquity: such were Berofus of the Chaldæans, Abydenus of the Assyrians, who even mentions the dove which was sent forth, as doth also Plutarch of the Greeks: such too was Lucian, who reports, that at Hierapolis in Syria, a very ancient history of the ark was extant, together with an account not only of the
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chosen persons who were thereby preserved, but also of the rest of the animals. The same history was likewise extant according to Molo and Nicolaus Damascenus. The latter indeed expressly mentions the word *ark*, which also, according to Apollodorus, is met with in the history of Deucalion.—It is further testified by many Spanish authors, that some traditional remembrance of the deluge, and of the animals preserved, nay even of the raven and the dove, obtains in parts of America, as in Cuba, in Mechoacan, in Nicaragua: of the deluge itself also, in that part which is now called Castilla del Oro, or the Golden Castile. Even the observation of Pliny, that Joppa was built before the flood, is declaratory of the parts of the earth inhabited before that event.—The place where the ark rested, is shewn, by the uniform testimony of the Armenians from the earliest ages to the present day, to have been on the Gordiæan mountains. *Japhet*, from whom Europe was peopled, and from
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that word *Ion*, or, as it was formerly pronounced *Javon*, of the Greeks, and Hammon of the Africans, are names which appear also in the Mosaic history; and farther vestiges of ancient names are noticed by Josephus and others, in national and local etymologies. What poet hath not recorded the attempt to scale heaven? The destruction of Sodom by fire is related by Diodorus Siculus, by Strabo, by Tacitus, by Pliny, by Solinus. The antiquity of the custom of circumcision has been attested by Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, and Philo Byblius: it is attested, to this day, by the nations descended from Abraham: not only by the Hebrews, but by the Idumæans, the Ishmaelites and others. Accounts of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of Joseph, agreeing with the Mosaic, were formerly extant in Philo Byblius, taken from Sanchuniathon; in Berofus, Hecataeus, Damascenus, Artapanus, Eupolemus, Demetrius, and partly also in that very ancient author who composed the

Orphic

Orphic verses. Some account of them is even now extant in Justin, taken from Trogius Pompeius. Moses himself and *his* actions, are recorded by almost all those writers. His preservation from the water, and his receipt of the two tables from God, are expressly mentioned in the Orphic verses. To these we may add what is said by Polemon, and frequent passages relative to the departure from Ægypt, which are contained in the Ægyptian writers, Manethon, Lyfimachus, Chæremon. Moreover, it is wholly inconsistent with reason to believe, that Moses, hated as he was not only by the Ægyptians, but also by many other nations, by the Idumæans, for example, the Arabs, the Phœnicians, should have dared publicly to offer an account of the creation of the world, and of matters of the highest antiquity, when that account might either have been refuted by others preceding, or at least would have had to combat with long-established and general prejudices; or, again, that he

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should have ventured to send forth a representation of the events of *his own* time; when that representation might have been instantly contradicted by many *living* witnesses. Diodorus Siculus, Strabo; Pliny, Tacitus, and after them Dionysius Longinus on the sublime, have all made mention of Moses: Pliny also and Apuleius, as well as the Talmudists, speak of Jamnes and of Mambres, who made * a stand against Moses in Ægypt. In some places, but more especially among the Pythagoreans, we find parts of the very laws and ceremonies extant which were appointed by Moses. Proofs so signal are exhibited by Strabo and by Justin, from Trogus, as well of the religion as of the moral justice of the ancient Jews, that it now indeed were needless to adduce the passages which either are or have been discovered, in reference to Joshua and others, correspondent with

* See Exod. c. vii. ver. 11.—“ Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses,” &c. 2 Tim. c. iii. ver. 8.

the Hebrew accounts ; for whosoever hath that firm belief in Moses, which without the greatest indecency cannot possibly be withholden from him, must acknowledge, from the fullest conviction, that “ noble works were done ” by the Almighty in the times of old. And this it is the main object of our present argument to prove. The miracles of a later date, those for instance, of Elias, of Elisha, and of others, ought so much the less to be thought liable to suspicion, because in their days, Judæa was become a country of much greater note, and was moreover rendered, by its difference in religion, an object of jealous hatred to all its neighbours ; so that *they* with the greatest ease might have stopped the progress of any spreading imposture. The account of Jonas, who was three days in the whale’s belly, is given by Lycophron and by Æneas Gazæus ; admitting the substitution of the name of Hercules ; to whose celebrity it was usual, as Tacitus hath remarked, to attribute generally all great

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exploits. Julian himself who was no less an enemy of the Jews than of the Christians, hath actually, by dint of historical evidence, been forced into conviction and confession, that men of divine inspiration did certainly once exist among the Jews; and that fire from heaven did really descend upon the sacrifices of Moses and Elias. And here, indeed, it must be observed, that not only heavy penalties were instituted, among the Hebrews, for them who should presume falsely to assert to themselves the gift of prophecy; but further, that many kings, who might have established and secured their authority thereby, many of the wisest men also, as Esdras and others were, would never dare to arrogate a title to that honourable function. Neither was it once claimed by any person whatsoever for some ages before Jesus. Much less was it possible that so many thousand persons should be imposed upon by the asseveration of that strange, and as it were continual and public sign, the oracular judgment (of the

Urim and Thummim) which shone forth perpetually from the breast-plate of the high priest : the duration of which sign until the destruction of the first temple, is always so entirely credited by all the Jews, that it is absolutely necessary that their fore-fathers *must* have been convinced of the undoubted certainty of the fact.

C H A P. XVII.

THE SAME PROVED FROM PROPHECIES.

ANOTHER argument, nearly allied to that of miracles, nor less conclusive of a Divine Providence, arises from that prophetic declaration of future events, which is seen so repeatedly and so manifestly verified among the Hebrews. Such was the prediction which declared, that he who should rebuild Jericho, should become childless. Such too was that of the destruction of the temple of Bethel by a king, and that king expressly named Josiah, above 300 years before the actual

E 2 event.