## VIEW

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OF THE

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### EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,

#### VOL. R

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### VIEW

OF THE

### EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN THREE PARTS.

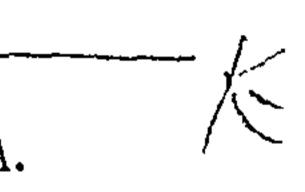
PART I. Of the direct Hiftorical Evidence of Christianity, and wherein it is diffinguished from the Evidence alledged

for other Miracles.

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PART II. Of the Auxiliary Evidences of Christianity.

PART III. A brief Confideration of fome popular Objections.



BY WILLIAM PALEY, M. A. ARCHDEACON OF CARLISLE.

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M.DCCC.

#### TO THE

#### HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

# JAMES YORK, D. D.

LORD BISHOF OF ELY.

#### MY LORD,

WHEN five years ago an important flation in the University of Cambridge awaited your Lordship's disposal, you were pleafed to offer it to me. The circumstances, under which this offer was made, demand a public acknowledgement. I had never feen your Lordship: I possessed no connection which could poffibly recommend me to your favour : I was known to you, only by my endeavours, in common with  $A_{3}$ many

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many others, to difcharge my duty as a tutor in the University; and by some very imperfect, but certainly well intended, and, as you thought, useful publications since. In an age by no means wanting in examples of honourable patronage, although this deferve not to be • mentioned in respect of the object of your Lordship's choice, it is inferior to none in the purity and disinterestedness

## of the motives which fuggested it.

How the following work may be received, I pretend not to foretell. My first prayer concerning it is, that it may do good to any: my fecond hope, that it may affist, what it hath always been my earnest with to promote, the religious part of an academical education. If in this latter view it might feem, in any degree, to excuse your Lordship's 7 judgement

## [ vii ]

judgement of its author, I shall be gratified by the reflection, that, to a kindness flowing from public principles, I have made the best public return in my power.

In the mean time, and in every event, I rejoice in the opportunity here afforded me, of teltifying the fenfe I entertain of

your Lordfhip's conduct, and of a notice which I regard as the moft flattering diftinction of my life. I am, My Lord, With fentiments of gratitude and refpect, Your Lordfhip's faithful And moft obliged fervant, W. PALEY.

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#### PROP.II.

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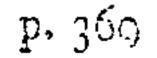
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#### CHAP. II.

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### Confideration of fome specific instances

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Preparatory Confiderations.

DEEM it unneceffary to prove that man~ kind ftood in need of a revelation, becaufe I have met with no ferious perfon who thinks that even under the Christian revelation we have too much light, or any degree of affurance which is fuperfluous. I defire moreover that in judging of Christianity it may be remembered, that the question lies between this religion and none: for, if the Christian religion be not credible, no one, with whom we have to do, will support the pretensions of any other.

Suppose then the world we live in to have had a Creator; suppose it to appear from



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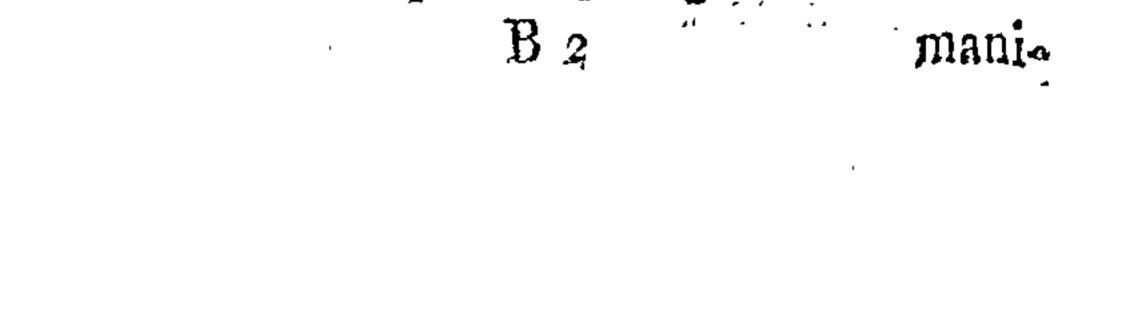
the predominant aim and tendency of the provisions and contrivances observable in the universe, that the Deity, when he formed it, confulted for the happiness of his sensitive creation; suppose the disposition which dictated this council to continue; suppose a part of the creation to have received faculties from their Maker, by which they are capable of rendering a moral obedience to his will, and of voluntarily purfuing any end for which he has defigned them; fuppose the Creator to intend for these his rational and accountable agents a fecond ftate of exiftence in which their fituation will be regulated by their behaviour in the first state, by which fuppolition (and by no other) the objection to the divine government in not putting a difference between the good and the bad, and the inconfiftency of this confusion with the care and benevolence difcoverable in the works of the Deity is done away; fuppose it to be of the utmost importance to the fubjects of this difpensation to know what is intended for them, that is, suppose the knowledge of it to be highly conducive to the

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## [ 3 ]

happinels of the fpecies, a purpole which fo many provisions of nature are calculated to promote: Suppole, neverthelefs, almost the whole race, either by the imperfection of their faculties, the misfortune of their fituation, or by the loss of fome prior revelation, to want this knowledge, and not to be likely without the aid of a new revelation to attain it; under these circumstances is it improbable that a revelation should be made? Is it incredible that God should interpose for such a purpose? Suppose him to design for mankind a future state, is it unlikely that he should acquaint them with it?

Now in what way can a revelation be made but by miracles? In none which we are able to conceive. Confequently, in whatever degree it is probable or not very improbable that a revelation fhould be communicated to mankind at all, in the fame degree is it probable or not very improbable that miracles fhould be wrought. Therefore, when miracles are related to have been wrought in the promulgating of a revelation



[ 4 ]

manifeftly wanted, and, if true, of ineftimable value, the improbability which arifes from the miraculous nature of the things related, is not greater than the original improbability that fuch a revelation should be imparted by God.

I wifh it however to be correctly underftood, in what manner, and to what extent, this argument is alledged. We do not alfume the attributes of the Deity, or the exiftence of a future state, in order to prove the reality of miracles. That reality always must be proved by evidence. We affert only, that in miracles adduced in fupport of revelation there is not any fuch antecedent improbability as no teftimony can furmount. And for the purpole of maintaining this affertion, we contend, that the incredibility of miracles related to have been wrought in attestation of a message from God, conveying intelligence of a future state of rewards and punishments, and teaching mankind how to prepare themfelves for that flate, is not in itself, greater than the event, call it

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## [ 5 ]

either probable or improbable, of the two following propolitions being true : namely, first, that a future state of existence should be deftined by God for his human creation; and, fecondly, that, being fo deftined, he should acquaint them with it. It is not neceffary for our purpole that these propolitions be capable of proof, or even that, by arguments drawn from the light of nature, they can be made out to be probable. It is enough that we are able to fay concerning them, that they are not fo violently improbable, fo contradictory to what we already believe of the Divine power and character, that either the propositions themselves, or facts strictly connected with the propositions (and therefore no farther improbable than they are improbable), ought to be rejected at first fight, and to be rejected by whatever strength or complication of evidence they be attefted.

This is the prejudication we would refift. For to this length does a modern objection to miracles go, viz. that no human tefti-



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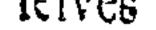
mony can in any cafe render them credible. I think the reflection above flated, that, if there be a revelation, there must be miracles; and that under the circumstances in which the human species are placed, a revelation is not improbable, or not improbable in any great degree, to be a fair answer to the whole objection,

But fince it is an objection which ftands in the very threshold of our argument, and, if admitted, is a bar to every proof, and to all future reasoning upon the subject, it may be necessary, before we proceed farther, to examine the principle upon which it professes to be founded: which principle is concifely this, that it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false.

Now there appears a fmall ambiguity in the term "experience," and in the phrafes "contrary to experience," or "contradicting experience," which it may be neceffary

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to remove in the first place. Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is then only contrary to experience, when the fact is related to have exifted at a time and place, at which time and place we being prefent did not perceive it to exist; as if it should be afferted, that in a particular room, and at a particular hour of a certain day, a man was raifed from the dead, in which room, and at the time specified, we being present and looking on perceived no fuch event to have taken place. Here the affertion is contrary to experience properly fo called; and this is a contrariety which no evidence can furmount. It matters nothing, whether the fact be of a miraculous nature or not. But although this be the experience, and the contrariety, which Archbishop Tillotson alledged in the quotation with which Mr. Hume opens his effay, it is certainly not that experience, nor that contrariety, which Mr. Hume himfelf intended to object. And, fhort of this, I know no intelligible fignification which can be affixed to the term " contrary to experience," but one, viz. that of not having our-B 4 felves





## [ 6 ]

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### [ 7 ]

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felves experienced any thing fimilar to the thing related, or fuch things not being generally experienced by others. I fay " not generally ;" for to ftate concerning the fact in queftion, that no fuch thing was *ever* experienced, or that *univerfal* experience is against it, is to assume the fubject of the controversy.

Now the improbability which arifes from the want (for this properly is a want, not a contradiction) of experience, is only equal to the probability there is, that, if the thing were true, we fhould experience things fimilar to it, or that fuch things would be generally experienced. Suppose it then to be true that miracles were wrought upon the first promulgation of Christianity, when nothing but miracles could decide its authority, is it certain that fuch miracles would be repeated fo often, and in fo many places, as to become objects of general experience? Is it a probability approaching to certainty? Is it a probability of any great ftrength or force? Is it fuch as no evidence can encounter? 5

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counter? And yet this probability is the exact converse, and therefore the exact meafure of the improbability which arises from the want of experience, and which Mr. Hume represents as invincible by human testimony.

It is not like alledging a new law of nature, or a new experiment in natural philofophy, becaufe, when thefe are related, it is expected that, under the fame circumftances, the fame effect will follow univerfally; and in proportion as this expectation is juftly entertained, the want of a correfponding experience negatives the hiftory. But to expect concerning a miracle that it fhould fucceed upon repetition, is to expect that which would make it ceafe to be a miracle, which is contrary to its nature as fuch, and would totally deftroy the ufe and purpofe for which it was wrought.

The force of experience as an objection to miracles is founded in the prefumption, either that the course of nature is invariable,

### [ IO ]

or that, if it be ever varied, variations will be frequent and general. Has the neceffity of this alternative been demonstrated? Permit us to call the course of nature the agency of an intelligent Being, and is there any good reason for judging this state of the case to be probable? Ought we not rather to expect, that such a Being, upon occasions of peculiar importance, may interrupt the order which he had appointed, yet, that such occasions such return feldom; that these interruptions consequently should be confined to the experience of a few; that the want of it, therefore, in many, should be matter neither of surprise nor objection?

But as a continuation of the argument from experience it is faid, that, when we advance accounts of miracles, we affign effects without caufes, or we attribute effects to caufes inadequate to the purpofe, or to caufes of the operation of which we have no experience. Of what caufes, we may afk, and of what effects does the objection fpeak ? If it be anfwered that, when we afcribe the

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### [ 11 ]

cure of the palfy to a touch, of blindness to the anointing of the eyes with clay, or the raising of the dead to a word, we lay ourfelves open to this imputation; we reply, that we afcribe no fuch effects to fuch caufes. We perceive no virtue or energy in these things more than in other things of the fame kind. They are merely figns to connect the mirrele with its end. The effect we afcribe finiply to the volition of the Deity; of whofe exiltence and power, not to fay of whole prefence and agency, we have previous and independent proof. We have therefore all we feek for in the works of rational agents, a fufficient power and an adequate motive. In a word, once believe that there is a God, and miracles are not incredible.

Mr. Hume flates the cafe of miracles to be a contest of opposite improbabilities, that is to fay, a question whether it be more improbable that the miracle should be true, or the testimony false; and this I think a fair account of the controvers. But herein I remark a want of argumentative justice, that, in

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## [ 12 ]

in defcribing the improbability of miracles, he fuppresses all those circumstances of extenuation, which refult from our knowledge of the existence, power, and disposition of ' the Deity, his concern in the creation, the end answered by the miracle, the importance of that end, and its fubferviency to the plan purfued in the work of nature. As Mr. Hume has represented the question, miracles are alike incredible to him who is previoully affured of the conftant agency of a Divine Being, and to him who believes that no fuch Being exifts in the universe. They are equally incredible, whether related to have been wrought upon occasions the most deferving, and for purposes the most beneficial, or for no affignable end whatever, or for an end confessedly trifling or pernicious. This furely cannot be a correct statement. In adjusting also the other fide of the balance, the strength and weight of testimony, this author has provided an answer to every possible accumulation of historical proof by telling us, that we are not obliged to explain how the ftory or the evidence arofe.

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arofe. Now I think that we are obliged; not, perhaps, to fhew by politive accounts how it did, but by a probable hypothefis how it might fo happen. The exiftence of the teftimony is a phenomenon. The truth of the fact folves the phenomenon. If we reject this folution, we ought to have fome other to reft in; and none even by our adverfaries can be admitted, which is not confiftent with the principles that regulate human affairs and human conduct at prefent, or which makes men *then* to have been a different kind of beings from what they are now.

But the fhort confideration which, independently of every other, convinces me that there is no folid foundation in Mr. Hume's conclusion is the following. When a theorem is proposed to a mathematician, the first thing he does with it is to try it upon a fimple case; and, if it produce a false result, he is fure that there must be fome mistake in the demonstration. Now to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr. Hume's

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Hume's theorem. If twelve men, whole probity and good fenfe I had long known, should feriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impoffible that they fhould be deceived; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, fhould call these men into his prefence, and offer them a short proposal, either to confess the imposture, or fubmit to be tied up to a gibbet; if they should refule with one voice to acknowledge that there exifted any fallehood or imposture in the cafe; if this threat were communicated to them feparately, yet with no different effect; if it was at laft executed; if I myfelf faw them, one after another, confenting to be racked, burnt, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account; still, if Mr. Hume's rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now, I undertake to fay that there exifts not a fceptic in the world who would not believe them; or who would defend fuch incredulity. Inftances

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Inftances of fpurious miracles fupported by ftrong apparent teftimony undoubtedly demand examination. Mr. Hume has endeavoured to fortify his argument by fome examples of this kind. I hope in a proper place to fhew that none of them reach the ftrength or circumftances of the Christian evidence. In these, however, confists the weight of his objection. In the principle itself I am perfuaded there is none.

### PART

#### CLES.

OF CHRISTIANITY, AND WHEREIN IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE EVI-DENCE ALLEDGED FOR OTHER MIRA-

### PART I.

OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

THE two propositions which I shall endeavour to establish are these:

I. That there is fatisfactory evidence that many, profeffing to be original witneffes of the Chriftian miracles, paffed their lives in labours, dangers and fufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteftation of the accounts which they delivered, and folely in confequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also fubmitted, from the fame motives, to new rules of conduct.

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II. That there is not fatisfactory evidence that perfons profeffing to be original witneffes of other miracles, in their nature as certain as thefe are, have ever acted in the fame manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and properly in confequence of their belief of those accounts.

The first of these propositions, as it forms the argument, will ftand at the head of the following nine chapters.

CHAP.

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### [ 19 ]

### CHAP. I.

There is fatisfactory evidence that many, profeffing to be original witneffes of the Chriftian miracles, paffed their lives in labours, dangers and fufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteffation of the accounts which they delivered, and folely in confequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they alfo fubmitted, from the fame motives, to new rules of conduct.

TO fupport this proposition, two points are neceffary to be made out: first, that the founder of the institution, his affociates and immediate followers, acted the part which the proposition imputes to them: fecondly, that they did fo in attestation of the miraculous history recorded in our foriptures, and folely in confequence of their belief of the truth of this history.

Before we produce any particular tefti-C 2 mony

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### [ 20 ]

mony to the activity and fufferings which compose the subject of our first affertion, it will be proper to confider the degree of probability which the affertion derives from the *nature of the cafe*, that is, by inferences from those parts of the cafe which, in point of fact, are on all hands acknowledged.

First then, the Christian religion exist, and therefore by some means or other was established. Now it either owes the princi-

ple of its establishment, i. e. its first publication, to the activity of the perfon who was the founder of the inftitution, and of those who were joined with him in the undertaking, or we are driven upon the ftrange fuppolition, that, although they might lie by, others would take it up; although they were quiet and filent, other perfons bufied themfelves in the fuccels and propagation of their ftory. This is perfectly incredible. To me it appears little lefs than certain, that, if the first announcing of the religion by the founder had not been followed up by the zeal and industry of his immediate disciples, the

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the attempt must have expired in its birth. Then as to the kind and degree of exertion which was employed, and the mode of life to which these perfons submitted, we reafonably fuppofe it to be like that which we obferve in all others who voluntarily become missionaries of a new faith. Frequent, earneft and laborious preaching, conftantly converfing with religious perfons upon religion, a fequestration from the common pleafures, engagements and varieties of life, and an addiction to one ferious object, compose the habits of such men. I do not fay that this mode of life is without enjoyment, but I fay that the enjoyment fprings from fincerity. With a confcioufness at the bottom of hollowness and falsehood, the fatigue and reftraint would become insupportable. I am apt to believe that very few hypocrites engage in these undertakings; or, however, perfift in them long. Ordinarily speaking, nothing can overcome the indolence of mankind, the love which is natural to most tempers of cheerful fociety and cheerful fcenes, or the defire, which is С 3 common

### [ 22 ]

common to all, of perfonal ease and freedom, but conviction.

Secondly, it is alfo highly probable, from the nature of the cafe, that the propagation of the new religion was attended with difficulty and danger. As addreffed to the Jews, it was a fyftem adverfe not only to their habitual opinions, but to those opinions upon which their hopes, their partialities, their pride, their confolation was founded. This people, with or without reason, had worked themselves into a persuasion, that fome fignal and greatly advantageous change was to be effected in the condition of their country, by the agency of a longpromised messenger from heaven\*. The rulers of the Jews, their leading fect, their

\* " Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus et conflans opinio, esse in fatis, ut co tempore Judza profecti rerum potirentur." Sueton. Vespasian. cap. 4-8.

"Pluribus perfuasio inerat, antiquis facerdotum literis contincri, eo ipfo tempore fore, ut valeiceret oriens, profectique Judzâ rerum potirentur." Tacit. Hift. lib. v. cap. 9-13.

### priefthood

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priefthood had been the authors of this perfuafion to the common people. So that it was not merely the conjecture of theoretical divines, or the fecret expectation of a few reclufe devotees, but it was become the popular hope and paffion, and, like all popular opinions, undoubting, and impatient of contradiction. They clung to this hope under every misfortune of their country, and with more tenacity as their dangers or calamities increased. To find therefore that expectations fo gratifying were to be worfe than difappointed; that they were to end in the diffusion of a mild unambitious religion, which, instead of victories and triumphs, instead of exalting their nation and inflitution above the reft of the world, was to advance those whom they despised to an equality with themfelves, in those very points of comparison in which they most valued their own diffinction, could be no very pleafing difcovery to a Jewifh mind; nor could the meffengers of fuch intelligence expect to be well received or eafily credited. The doctrine was equally harfh and novel. The C 4.

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The extending of the kingdom of God to those who did not conform to the law of Moses, was a notion that had never before entered into the thoughts of a Jew.

The character of the new inftitution was, in other respects also, ungrateful to Jewish habits and principles. Their own religion was in a high degree technical. Even the enlightened Jew placed a great deal of ftrefs upon the ceremonies of his law, faw in them a great deal of virtue and efficacy; the grofs and vulgar had fcarcely any thing elfe; and the hypocritical and oftentatious magnified them above measure, as being the instruments of their own reputation and influence. The Christian scheme, without formally repealing the Levitical code, lowered its effimation extremely. In the place of firictness and zeal in performing the obfervances which that code prefcribed, or which tradition had added to it, the new fect preached up faith, well-regulated affections, inward purity and moral rectitude of dispofition, as the true ground, on the part of the worshipper,

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worshipper, of merit and acceptance with God. This, however rational it may appear, or recommending to us at present, did not by any means facilitate the plan then. On the contrary, to disparage those qualities which the highest characters in the country valued themselves most upon, was a fure way of making powerful enemies. As if the frustration of the national hope was not enough, the long-effected merit of ritual zeal and punctuality was to be decried, and that her laws presching to Laws

that by Jews preaching to Jews.

The ruling party at Jerufalem had juft before crucified the founder of the religion. That is a fact which will not be difputed. They therefore who ftood forth to preach the religion, muft neceffarily reproach thefe rulers with an execution, which they could not but reprefent as an unjuft and cruel murder. This would not render their office more eafy, or their fituation more fafe.

With regard to the interference of the Roman

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Roman government which was then establifhed in Judea, I fhould not expect, that, despifing, as it did, the religion of the country, it would, if left to itself, animadvert, either with much vigilance, or much feverity, upon the fchilms and controverfies which arofe within it. Yet there was that in Christianity which might easily afford a handle of acculation with a jealous government. The Christians avowed an unqualified obedience to a new mafter. They avowed alfo that he was the perfon who had been foretold to the Jews under the fuspected title of King. The fpiritual nature of this kingdom, the confiftency of this obedience with civil subjection, were distinctions teo refined to be entertained by a Roman prefident, who viewed the bufinefs at a great distance, or through the medium of very hostile representations. Our histories accordingly inform us, that this was the turn which the enemies of Jefus gave to his character and pretentions in their remonstrances with Pontius Pilate. And Justin Martyr, about a hundred years afterwards, complains that



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that the fame miftake prevailed in his time; "ye having heard that we are waiting for a kingdom, fuppofe, without diftinguishing, that we mean a human kingdom, when in truth we speak of that which is with God<sup>\*</sup>." And it was undoubtedly a natural source of calumny and misconstruction.

The preachers therefore of Chriftianity had to contend with prejudice backed by power. They had to come forward to a difappointed people, to a priefthood poffeffing a confiderable fhare of municipal authority, and actuated by ftrong motives of oppofition and refentment; and they had to do this under a foreign government, to whofe favour they made no pretenfions, and which was conftantly furrounded by their enemies. The well known, becaufe the experienced fate of reformers, whenever the reformation fubverts fome reigning opinion, and does not proceed upon a change already taken place in the fentiments of a country, will not al-

\* Ap. 1<sup>me.</sup> p. 16, ed. Thirl.

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low, much lefs lead us, to fuppose, that the first propagators of Christianity at Jerufalem and in Judea, with the difficulties and the enemies which they had to contend with, and entirely destitute, as they were, of force, authority or protection, could execute their mission with personal ease and fafety.

Let us next enquire what might reafonably be expected by the preachers of Chriftianity when they turned themfelves to the heathen public. Now the first thing that ftrikes us is, that the religion they carried with them was exclusive. It denied without referve the truth of every article of heathen mythology, the existence of every object of their worship. It accepted no compromise: it admitted no comprehension. It must prevail, if it prevailed at all, by the overthrow of every ftatue, altar and temple, in the world. It will not eafily be credited that a defign, fo bold as this was, could in any age be attempted to be carried into execution with impunity.

For

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For it ought to be confidered, that this was not setting forth, or magnifying the character and worfhip of fome new competitor for a place in the Pantheon, whole pretensions might be discussed or afferted without questioning the reality of any others. It was pronouncing all other gods to be false, and all other worship vain. From the facility with which the Polytheilm of ancient nations admitted new objects of worship into the number of their acknowledged divinities, or the patience with which they might entertain proposals of this kind, we can argue nothing as to their toleration of a fystem, or of the publishers and active propagators of a fystem, which fwept away the very foundation of the exifting eftablishment. The one was nothing more than what it would be, in Popish countries, to add a faint to the calendar; the other was to abolish and tread under foot the calendar itself.

Secondly, it ought also to be confidered, that this was not the case of philosophers pro-

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propounding in their books, or in their fchools, doubts concerning the truth of the popular creed, or even avowing their difbelief of it. These philosophers did not go about from place to place to collect profelytes from amongst the common people; to form in the heart of the country focietiesprofeffing their tenets; to provide for the order, instruction and permanency of these focieties; nor did they enjoin their followers to withdraw themfelves from the public worship of the temples, or refuse a compliance with rites inftituted by the laws<sup>\*</sup>. Thefe things are what the Christians did, and what the Philosophers did not : and in these confifted the activity and danger of the enterprife.

#### Thirdly, it ought also to be confidered,

\* The best of the ancient philosophers, Plato, Cicero, and Epictetus, allowed, or rather enjoined, men to worship the gods of the country, and in the established form. See passages to this purpose, collected from their works by Dr. Clarke, Nat. and Rev. Rel. p. 180, ed. v. Except Socrates, they all thought it wifer to comply with the laws than to contend.

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that this danger proceeded not merely from folemn acts and public refolutions of the state, but from sudden bursts of violence at particular places, from the licence of the populace, the rafhnefs of fome magistrates and the negligence of others; from the influence and infligation of interested adversaries, and, in general, from the variety and warmth of opinion which an errand fo novel and extraordinary could not fail of exciting. I can conceive that the teachers of Christianity might both fear and fuffer much from these causes, without any general perfecution being denounced against them by imperial authority. Some length of time, I fhould fuppose, might pass, before the vast machine of the Roman empire would be put in motion, or its attention be obtained to religious controversy: but, during that time, a great deal of ill usage might be endured, by a set of friendless, unprotected travellers, telling men, wherever they came, that the religion of their anceftors, the religion in which they had been brought up, the religion of the

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the state and of the magistrate, the rites which they frequented, the pomp which they admired, was throughout a system of folly and delusion.

Nor do I think that the teachers of Chriftianity would find protection in that general difbelief of the popular theology, which is supposed to have prevailed amongst the intelligent part of the heathen public. It is by no means true that unbelievers are usually tolerant. They are not difposed (and why fhould they?) to endanger the prefent ftate of things, by fuffering a religion of which they believe nothing, to be disturbed by another of which they believe as little. They are ready themfelves to conform to any thing; and are, oftentimes, amongst the foremost to procure conformity from others, by any method which they think likely to be efficacious. When was ever a change of religion patronized by infidels? How little, 'notwithstanding the reigning fcepticism, and the magnified liberality of that age, the true principles

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principles of toleration were underftood by the wifest men amongst them, may be gathered from two eminent and uncontested examples. The younger Pliny, polifhed, as he was, by all the literature of that foft and elegant period, could gravely pronounce this monftrous judgment: " Those who perfifted in declaring themfelves Christians, I ordered to be led away to punifhment (i. e. to execution), for I DID NOT DOUBT, whatever it was that they confessed, that contumacy and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished." His master, Trajan, a mild and accomplished prince, went, nevertheless, no farther in his fentiments of moderation and equity, than what appears in the following refeript: " The Christians are not to be fought for; but if any are brought before you, and convicted, they are to be punished." And this direction he gives, after it had been reported to him by his own prefident, that, by the most strict examination, nothing could be difcovered in the principles of these perfons, but " a bad and excellive fuperftition," accompanied, it feems, with an oath Vol. I. or

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or mutual federation, " to allow themfelves in no crime or immoral conduct whatever." The truth is, the ancient heathens confidered religion entirely as an affair of state, as much under the tuition of the magiftrate as any other part of the police. The religion of that age was not merely allied to the flate; it was incorporated into it. Many of its offices were administered by the magistrate. Its titles of pontiffs, augurs, and flamens, were borne by fenators, confuls, and generals. Without discuffing therefore the truth of the theology, they refented every affront put upon the eftablifhed worship, as a direct opposition to the authority of government.

Add to which, that the religious fystems of those times, however ill supported by evidence, had been long eftablished. The ancient religion of a country has always many votaries, and fometimes not the fewer because its origin is hidden in remoteness and obscurity. Men have a natural veneration for antiquity, especially in matters of religion.

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religion. What Tacitus fays of the Jewish, was more applicable to the heathen establishment, "Hi ritus, quoquo modo inducti, antiquitate defenduntur." It was also a fplendid and fumptuous worfhip. It had its priesthood, its endowments, its temples. Statuary, painting, architecture, and mufic, contributed their effect to its ornament and magnificence. It abounded in feftival fhows and folemnities, to which the common people are greatly addicted; and which were of a nature to engage them much more than any thing of that fort among us. These things would retain great numbers on its fide by the fafcination of fpectacle and pomp, as well as interest many in its prefervation by the advantage which they drew from it. " It was moreover interwoven," as Mr. Gibbon rightly reprefents it, "with every circumstance of bufinefs or pleafure, of public or private life, with all the offices and amufements of fociety." Upon the due celebration alfo of its rites, the people were taught to believe, and did believe, that the profperity D 2 of

#### [ 36 ] of their country in a great measure depended.

I am willing to accept the account of the matter which is given by Mr. Gibbon: " The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world, were all confidered by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful:" and I would afk, from which of thefe three claffes of men were the Chrislian missionaries to look for protection or impunity? Could they expect it from the people, " whole acknowledged confidence in the public religion" they subverted from its foundation? from the philosopher, who, " confidering all religions as equally false," would of course rank theirs among the number, with the addition of regarding them as bufy and troublefome zealots? or from the magiftrate, who, fatisfied with the " utility" of the fubfifting religion, would not be likely to countenance a spirit of profelytism and innovation; a system, which declared war against every

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every other, and which, if it prevailed, muft end in a total rupture of public opinion; an upftart religion, in a word, which was not content with its own authority, but muft difgrace all the fettled religions of the world? It was not to be imagined that he would endure with patience, that the religion of the emperor and of the ftate fhould be calumniated and borne down by a company of fuperfitious and defpicable Jews.

Laftly; the nature of the cafe affords a

ftrong proof, that the original teachers of Chriftianity, in confequence of their new profeffion, entered upon a new and fingular courfe of life. We may be allowed to prefume, that the inftitution which they preached to others, they conformed to in their own perfons; becaufe this is no more than what every teacher of a new religion both does, and muft do, in order to obtain either profelytes or hearers. The change which this would produce was very confiderable. It is a change which we do not eafily effimate, becaufe, ourfelves and all about us D 3 being

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being habituated to the inftitution from our infancy, it is what we neither experience nor observe. After men became Christians, much of their time was fpent in prayer and devotion, in religious meetings, in celebrating the eucharift, in conferences, in exhortations, in preaching, in an affectionate intercourfe with one another, and correspondence with other focieties Perhaps their mode of life, in its form and pabit, was not very unlike the Unitas Fratrum, or of modern Methodifts. Think then what it was to become *fuch* at Corinth, at Ephefus, at Antioch, or even at Jerufalem. How new ! how aliene from all their former habits and ideas, and from those of every body about them! What a revolution there must have been of opinions and prejudices to bring the matter to this!

We know what the precepts of the religion are; how pure, how benevolent, how difinterested a conduct they enjoin; and that this purity and benevolence is extended to the very thoughts and affections. We

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are not perhaps at liberty to take for granted that the lives of the preachers of Chriftianity were as perfect as their leffons : but we are entitled to contend, that the obfervable part of their behaviour must have agreed in a great measure with the duties which they taught. There was therefore, which is all that we affert, a course of life purfued by them, different from that which they before led. And this is of great importance. Men are brought to any thing almost fooner than to change their habit of life, especially when the change is either inconvenient, or made against the force of natural inclination, or with the loss of accultomed indulgencies. " It is the most difficult of all things to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous ones, as every one. may judge from what he feels in himfelf, as well as from what he fees in others<sup>\*</sup>." It is almost like making men over again.

Left then to myself, and without any

\* Hartley's Effays on Man, p. 190.

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more information than a knowledge of the existence of the religion, of the general story upon which it is founded, and that no act of power, force, or authority, was concerned in its first success, I should conclude, from the very nature and exigency of the cafe, that the author of the religion during his life, and his immediate disciples after his death, exerted themfelves in fpreading and publishing the institution throughout the country in which it began, and into which it was first carried; that, in the profecution of this purpose, they underwent the labours and troubles which we observe the propagators of new fects to undergo; that the attempt must necessarily have also been in a high degree dangerous; that from the fubject of the million, compared with the fixed opinions and prejudices of those to whom the miffionaries were to addrefs themfelves, they could hardly fail of encountering ftrong and frequent opposition; that, by the hand of government, as well as from the fudden fury and unbridled licence of the people, they would oftentimes experience injurious and

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and cruel treatment; that, at any rate, they must have always had fo much to sear for their personal safety, as to have passed their lives in a state of constant peril and anxiety; and lastly, that their mode of life and conduct, visibly at least, corresponded with the institution which they delivered, and, so far, was both new, and required continual self-denial.

#### CHAP.

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#### CHAP. II.

There is fatisfactory evidence that many, profeffing to be original witneffes of the Christian miracles, paffed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, volunta-, rily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in confequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the fame motives, to new rules of conduct.

AFTER thus confidering what was *likely* to happen, we are next to enquire how the transaction is represented in the feveral accounts that have come down to us. And this enquiry is properly preceded by the other, for as much as the reception of these accounts may depend in part upon the credibility of what they contain.

The obscure and distant view of Christianity,

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anity, which fome of the heathen writers of that age had gained, and which a few paffages in their remaining works incidentally discover to us, offers itself to our notice in the first place: because, so far as this evidence goes, it is the conceffion of adversaries; the fource from which it is drawn is unfulpected. Under this head a quotation from Tacitus, well known to every fcholar, must be inferted as deferving of particular attention. The reader will bear in mind that this paffage was written about seventy years after Chrift's death, and that it relates to transactions which took place about thirty years after that event. Speaking of the fire which happened at Rome in the time of Nero, and of the fufpicions which were entertained that the emperor himfelf was concerned in caufing it, the hiftorian proceeds in his narrative and observations thus:

"But neither these exertions, nor his largesses to the people, nor his offerings to the gods, did away the infamous imputation under

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under which Mero lay of having ordered the city to be set on fire. To put an end therefore to this report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the most cruel punishments, upon a fet of people who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and called by the vulgar Christians. The founder of that name was Chrift, who fuffered death in the reign of Tiberius, under his procurator Pontius Pilate.—This pernicious fuperstition, thus checked for a while, broke out again; and fpread not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but through Rome alfo, whither every thing bad upon earth finds its way, and is practifed. Some who confessed their sect were first seized, and afterwards by their information a vaft multitude were apprehended, who were convicted, not fo much of the crime of burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind. Their fufferings at their execution were aggravated by infult and mockery; for fome were difguifed in the fkins of wild beafts, and worried to death by dogs-fome were crucified-and others were

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## [ 45 ]

were wrapt in pitched fhirts", and fet on fire when the day clofed, that they might ferve as lights to illuminate the night. Nero lent his own gardens for thefe executions; and exhibited at the fame time a mock Circenfian entertainment, being a fpectator of the whole in the drefs of a charioteer, fometimes mingling with the crowd on foot, and fometimes viewing the fpectacles from his car. This conduct made the fufferers pitied; and though they were criminals, and deferving the feveres punishment, yet they were confidered as facrificed, not fo much out of a regard to the public good, as to gratify the cruelty of one man."

Our concern with this passage at prefent is only fo far as it affords a prefumption in • fupport of the proposition which we maintain, concerning the activity and fufferings

\* This is rather a paraphrafe, but is juftified by what the Scholiaft upon Juvenal fays—" Nero maleficos homines tedâ et papyro et cerá fupervestiebat, et sic ad ignem admoveri jubebat." Lard. Jewish and Heath. Test. vol. i. p. 359.

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## [ 46 ]

of the first teachers of Christianity. Now, confidered in this view, it proves three things? 1ft, that the founder of the inftitution was put to death; 2dly, that in the fame country in which he was put to death, the religion, after a short check, broke out again and fpread; 3dly, that it fo fpread, as that, within thirty-four years from the author's death, a very great number of Christians (ingens eorum multitudo) were found at Rome. From which fact, the two following inferences may be fairly drawn : first, that, if, in the space of thirty-four years from its commencement, the religion had fpread throughout Judea, had extended itfelf to Rome, and there had numbered a great multitude of converts, the original teachers and miffionaries of the inftitution could not have been idle; fecondly, that when the author of the undertaking was put to death as a malefactor for his attempt, the endeavours of his followers to establish his religion, in the same country, amongst the fame people, and in the fame age, could not but be attended with danger.

Suetonius,

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Suetonius, a writer contemporary with Tacitus, defcribing the transactions of the fame reign, uses these words: "Affecti suppliciis Christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novæ et maleficæ\*. The Christians, a set of men of a new and mischievous (or magical) superstition, were punished."

Since it is not mentioned *bere* that the burning of the city was the pretence of the punifhment of the Christians, or that they were the Christians of Rome who alone fuffered, it is probable that Suetonius refers to fome more general perfecution than the fhort and occasional one which Tacitus defcribes.

Juvenal, a writer of the fame age with the two former, and intending, it fhould feem, to commemorate the cruelties exercifed under Nero's government, has the following lines +:

- \* Suet. Nero. cap. 16.
- 7 Sat. 1, ver. 155.

"Pone

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Pone Tigellinum, tedà lucebis in ilià, Quâ stantes ardent, qui fixo gutture fumant; Et latum medià fulcum deducit \* arenâ."

"Defcribe Tigellinus (a creature of Nero's), and you shall fuffer the fame punishment with those who stand burning in their own flame and smoke, their head being held up by a stake fixed to their chin, till they make a long stream of blood and melted suphur on the ground."

If this paffage were confidered by itfelf; the fubject of the allufion might be doubtful; but when connected with the teftimony of Suetonius, as to the actual punifhment of the Chriftians by Nero; and with the account given by Tacitus of the *fpecies* of punifhment which they were made to undergo; I think it fufficiently probable, that thefe were the executions to which the poet refers.

These things, as hath already been ob-

\* Forfan " deducis."

ferved.

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ferved, took place within thirty one years after Chrift's death, that is, according to the course of nature, in the life-time, probably, of fome of the apostles, and certainly in the life-time of those who were converted by the apofiles, or who were converted in their time. If then the founder of the religion was put to death in the execution of his defign; if the first race of converts to the religion, many of them, fuffered the greatest extremities for their profession; it is hardly. credible, that those who came between the two, who were companions of the author of the inftitution during his life, and the teachers and propagators of the inflitution after his death, could go about their undertaking with eafe and fafety.

The teftimony of the younger Pliny belongs to a later period; for although he was contemporary with Tacitus and Suetonius, yet his account does not, like theirs, go back to the transfactions of Nero's reign, but is confined to the affairs of his own time. His celebrated letter to Trajan was written Vol. I. E abo

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about seventy years after Christ's death; and the information to be drawn from it, fo far as it is connected with our argument, relates principally to two points: first, to the number of Christians in Bithynia and Pontus, which was fo confiderable as to induce the governor of these provinces to fpeak of them in the following terms: "Multi, omnis ætatis, utriuíque fexûs etiam -neque enim civitates tantùm, sed vicos etiam et agros, superstitionis istius contagio pervagata eft." "There are many of every age and of both fexes-nor has the contagion of this fuperstition seized cities only, but fmaller towns alfo, and the open country." Great exertions must have been used by the preachers of Christianity to produce this state of things within this time. Secondly, to a point which hath been already noticed, and which I think of importance to be observed, namely, the sufferings to which Christians were exposed, without any public perfecution being denounced against them by fovereign authority. For, from Pliny's doubt how he was to act, his filence concerning

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concerning any fublifting law upon the fubject, his requesting the emperor's refeript, and the emperor, agreeably to his request, propounding a rule for his direction, without reference to any prior rule, it may be inferred, that there was, at that time, no public edict against the Christians in force. Yet from this fame epiftle of Pliny it appears " that accufations, trials, and examinations were, and had been, going on against them in the provinces over which he prefided; that fchedules were delivered by anonymous informers, containing the names of perfons who were fuspected of holding or of favouring the religion; that, in consequence of these informations, many had been apprehended, of whom fome boldly avowed their profession, and died in the caufe; others denied that they were Chriftians; others, acknowledging that they had once been Christians, declared that they had long ceafed to be fuch." All which demonftrates, that the profession of Christianity was at that time (in that country at least) attended with fear and danger: and yet this





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took place without any edict from the Roman fovereign commanding or authorizing the perfecution of Chriftians. This obfervation is farther confirmed by a refeript of Adrian to Minucius Fundanus, the proconful of Afia\*: from which refeript it appears that the cuftom of the people of Afia was to proceed against the Chriftians with tumult and uproar. This diforderly practice, I fay, is recognized in the edict, because the emperor enjoins, that, for the future, if the

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Chriftians were guilty, they fhould be legally brought to trial, and not be purfued by importunity and clamour:

Martial wrote a few years before the younger Pliny; and, as his manner was, made the fufferings of the Chriftians the fubject of his ridicule †. Nothing however could

\* Lard. Heath. Teft. v. ii. p. 110.

† In matutinâ nuper spectatus arenâ Mucius, imposuit qui sua membra socis,
Si patiens sortisque tibi durusque videtur,
Abderitanæ pectora plebis habes;

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could shew the notoriety of the fast with more certainty than this does. Martial's testimony, as well indeed as Pliny's, goes alfo to another point, viz. that the deaths of these men were martyrdoms in the strictest fense, that is to say, were so voluntary, that it was in their power, at the time of pronouncing the fentence, to have averted the execution, by confenting to join in heathen facrifices.

The conftancy, and by confequence the fufferings of the Christians of this period, is alfo referred to by Epictetus, who imputes their intrepidity to madnefs, or to a kind of fashion or habit; and about fifty years afterwards, by Marcus Aurelius, who afcribes it to obstinacy. " Is it possible (Epictetus asks) that a man may arrive at this temper, and become indifferent to those things, from

Nam cum dicatur, tunicâ præsente molestâ, Ure\* manum : plus est dicere, Non facio.

\* Forfan " thure manum."

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madnefs

#### [ 54 ]

madnels or from habit, *as the Galileans* \*?<sup>s</sup> " Let this preparation of the mind (to die) arife from its own judgment, and not from obstinacy *like the Christians* +."

> \* Epic. l. iv. c. 7. † Marc. Aur. Med. l. xi, c. 3.

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#### CHAP.

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#### CHAP. III.

There is fatisfactory evidence, that many, professing to be original withess of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the fame motives, to new rules of conduct.

OF the primitive condition of Christianity, a diftant only and general view can be acquired from heathen writers. It is in our own books that the detail and interior of the transaction must be fought for. And this is nothing different from what might be expected. Who would write a history of Christianity but a Christian? Who was likely to record the travels, fufferings, labours, or fucceffes of the Apostles, but one of their own number, or of their followers? E 4

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### [ 56 ]

Now these books come up in their accounts to the full extent of the proposition which we maintain. We have four histories of Jesus Chrift. We have a hiftory taking up the narrative from his death, and carrying on an account of the propagation of the religion, and of fome of the most eminent perfons engaged in it, for a space of nearly thirty years We have, what fome may think still more original, a collection of letters, written by certain principal agents in the bufinefs, upon the bufinefs, and in the midft of their concern and connection with it. And we have these writings feverally attefting the point which we contend for, viz. the fufferings of the witneffes of the hiftory, and attefting it in every variety of form in which it can be conceived to appear; directly and indirectly, expressly and incidentally, by affertion, recital, and allusion, by narratives of facts, and by arguments and discourses built upon these facts, either referring to them, or neceffarily prefuppoing them.

I remark this variety, because in examining

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ing ancient records, or indeed any species of testimony, it is, in my opinion, of the greatest importance to attend to the information or grounds of argument which are *cafually* and *undefignedly* difclosed; forasmuch as this species of proof is, of all others, the least liable to be corrupted by fraud or misrepresentation.

I may be allowed therefore, in the enquiry which is now before us, to fuggest fome conclusions of this fort, as preparatory

to more direct testimony.

1. Our books relate, that Jefus Chrift, the founder of the religion, was, in confequence of his undertaking, put to death, as a malefactor, at Jerufalem. This point at leaft will be granted, becaufe it is no more than what Tacitus has recorded. They then proceed to tell us, that the religion was, *notwithflanding*, fet forth at this fame city of Jerufalem, propagated from thence throughout Judea, and afterwards preached in other parts of the Roman empire. Thefepoints alfo

### [ . 58 ]

are fully confirmed by Tacitus, who informs us that the religion, after a short check, broke out again in the country where it took its rife; that it not only fpread throughout Judea, but had reached Rome; and that it had there great multitudes of converts : and all this within thirty years after its commencement. Now these facts afford a ftrong inference in behalf of the proposition which we maintain. What could the disciples of Chrift expect for themselves when they faw their mafter put to death? Could they hope to efcape the dangers, in which he had perished? If they have perfecuted me, they will also perfecute you, was the warning of common fense. With this example before their eyes, they could not be without a full fense of the peril of their future enterprise.

2. Secondly, all the hiftories agree in reprefenting Chrift as foretelling the perfecution of his followers.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall 9 be

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be hated of all nations for my name's fake\*."

"When affliction or perfecution arifeth for the word's fake, immediately they are offended †."

"They fhall lay hands on you, and perfecute you, delivering you up to the fynagogues, and into prifons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's fake and ye fhall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolks and friends, and fome of you fhall they caufe to be put to death‡."

"The time cometh, that he that killeth you will think that he doeth God fervice. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come ye may remember that I told you of them §."

\* Mat. xxiv. 9. ‡ Mark iv. 17. See alfo x. 30. ‡ Luke xxi. 12-16. See alfo xi. 49. § John xvi. 4. See alfo xv. 20, and xvi. 33.

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[ 60 ]

I am not entitled to argue from these palfages, that Chrift actually did foretel thefe events, and that they did accordingly come to pafs, becaufe that would be at once to affume the truth of the religion : but I am entitled to contend, that one fide or other of the following disjunction is true; either that the evangelifis have delivered what Chrift really fpoke, and that the event corresponded with the prediction; or that they put the prediction into Christ's mouth, becaufe, at the time of writing the hiltory, the event had turned out fo to be: for the only two remaining fuppolitions appear in the higheft degree incredible, which are, either that Chrift filled the minds of his followers with fears and apprehentions, with-• out any reafon or authority for what he faid, and contrary to the truth of the cafe; or that, although Chrift had never foretold any fuch thing, and the event would have contradicted him if he had, yet hiftorians who lived in the age when the event was known, falfely as well as officioully, afcribed these words to him.

3. Thirdly,

### [ 61 ]

3. Thirdly, these books abound with exhortations to patience, and with topics of comfort under distrefs.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Chrift? Shall tribulation, or diffrefs, or perfecution, or famine, or nakednefs, or peril, or fword? Nay, in all thefe things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"."

"We are troubled on every fide, yet not distreffed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jefus, that the life also of Jefus might be made manifest in our body-knowing that he which raifed up the Lord Jefus shall raife us up alfo by Jefus, and shall prefent us with you-For which caufe we faint not; but, though our outward man perifh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our

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# Rom. viii. 35. 37.
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f 62 ]

light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory#."

" Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have fpoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of fuffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have feen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender

mercy†."

" Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilft ye were made a gazing-flock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilft ye became companions of them that were fo uled; for ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the fpoiling of your goods, knowing in yourfelves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring fub-



## [ 63 ]

ftance. Caft not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward; for he have need of patience, that, after he have done the will of God, ye might receive the promife\*."

"So that we ourfelves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your perfecutions and tribulations that ye endure. Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom for which ye also fuffer ;."

"We rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only fo, but we glory in tribulations alfo; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope ‡."

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are

\* Heb. x. 32-36. + 2 Theff. i. 1-5. ‡Rom. v. 3, 4par-

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## [ 64 ]

partakers of Chrift's fufferings. Wherefore let them that fuffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their fouls to him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator<sup>\*</sup>."

What could all these texts mean, if there was nothing in the circumstances of the times which required patience, which called for the exercise of constancy and resolution? Or will it be pretended that these exhortations (which, let it be observed, come not from one author, but from many) were put in, merely to induce a belief in after-ages, that the first Christians were exposed to dangers which they were not expoled to, or underwent fufferings which they did not undergo? If these books belong to the age to which they lay claim, and in which age, whether genuine or fpurious, they certainly did appear, this fupposition cannot be maintained for a moment; because I think it impoffible to believe, that passages, which must

\* 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13. 19.

# [ 65 ]

be deemed not only unintelligible, but falle, by the perfons into whofe hands the books upon their publication were to come, fhould neverthelefs be inferted, for the purpose of producing an effect upon remote generations. In forgeries which do not appear till many ages after that to which they pretend to belong, it is possible that fome contrivance of that fort may take place; but in no others can it be attempted.

#### Vol. I.

F

#### CHAP.

#### 66 ]

#### CHAP. IV.

There is fatisfactory evidence that many, profeffing to be original witneffes of the Chriftian miracles, paffed their lives in labours, dangers and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteflation of the accounts which they delivered, and folely in confequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they alfo fubmitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

THE account of the treatment of the religion and of the exertions of its first preachers, as flated in our fcriptures (not in a professed history of perfecutions, or in the connected manner in which I am about to recite it, but dispersedly and occasionally, in the course of a mixed general history, which circumstance alone negatives the supposition of any fraudulent defign), is the following: "That the founder of Christianity, from the commencement of his ministry to the time



# [ 67 ]

of his violent death, employed himself wholly in publishing the institution in Judea and Galilee; that, in order to affift him in this purpose, he made choice, out of the number of his followers, of twelve perfons, who might accompany him as he travelled from place to place; that, except a fhort abfence upon a journey, in which he fent them, two by two, to announce his million, and one, of a few days, when they went before him to Jerufalem, these persons were ftatedly and conftantly attending upon him; that they were with him at Jerusalem when he was apprehended and put to death; and that they were commissioned by him, when his own ministry was concluded, to publish his gospel, and collect disciples to it from all countries of the world." The account then proceeds to state, "That, a few days after his departure, these persons, with some of his relations, and some who had regularly frequented their society, assembled at Jerusalem; that, confidering the office of preaching the religion as now devolved upon them, and one of their number having deferted the caufe.  $F_2$ 

#### [ 68 ]

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caule, and, repenting of his perfidy, having destroyed himself, they proceeded to elect another into his place; and that they were careful to make their election out of the number of those who had accompanied their master from the first to the last, in order, as they alledged, that he might be a witnefs, together with themfelves, of the principal facts which they were about to produce and relate concerning him\*; that they began their work at Jerufalcm, by publicly afferting that this Jefus, whom the rulers and inhabitants of that place had fo lately crucified, was, in truth, the perfon in whom all their prophecies and long expectations terminated; that he had been fent amongst them by God; and that he was appointed by God the future judge of the human fpecies; that all who were folicitous to secure to themselves happinels after death, ought to receive him as fuch, and to make profession of their belief, by being baptized in his name<sup>†</sup>." The hiftory goes on to relate, "that confiderable

\* Ads i. 21, 22. + Ads xi.

numbers

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# [ 69 ]

numbers accepted this proposal, and that they who did fo, formed amongst themselves a strift union and society\*; that, the attention of the Jewish government being foon drawn upon them, two of the principal perfons of the twelve, and who also had lived most intimately and constantly with the founder of the religion, were feized as they were discoursing to the people in the temple; that, after being kept all night in prifon, they were brought the next day before an affembly, composed of the chief persons of the Jewish magistracy and priesthood; that this affembly, after fome confultation, found nothing, at that time, better to be done towards suppressing the growth of the fect, than to threaten their prisoners with punishment, if they persisted; that these men, after expressing, in decent but firm language, the obligation under which they confidered themfelves to be, to declare what they knew, "to fpeak the things which they had feen and heard," returned from the coun-

\* Acts v. 41.

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F 70 ]

cil, and reported what had passed to their companions; that this report, whilft it apprized them of the danger of their fituation and undertaking, had no other effect upon their conduct than to produce in them a general resolution to persevere, and an earnest prayer to God to furnish them with affistance, and to infpire them with fortitude, proportioned to the increasing exigency of the service"." A very short time after this, we read "that all the twelve apostles were feized and caft into prision ; that, being brought a fecond time before the Jewish Sanhedrim, they were upbraided with their difobedience to the injunction which had been laid upon them, and beaten for their contumacy; that being charged once more to defift, they were fuffered to depart; that however they neither quitted Jerusalem, nor ceased from preaching, both daily in the temple, and from house to house ‡; and that the twelve confidered themselves as fo entirely and exclufively devoted to this office, that they now

> \* Acts iv. 4 Acts v. 18. 4 Acts v. trans-

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# [ 71 ]

transferred what may be called the temporal affairs of the fociety to other hands \*."

. \* I do not know that it has ever been infinuated, that the Christian mission, in the hands of the apostles, was a scheme for making a sortune, or for getting money. But it may neverthelefs be fit to remark upon this paffage of their hiftory, how perfectly free they appear to have been from any pecuniary or interested views whatever. The most tempting opportunity which occurred, of making a gain of their converts, was by the cuftody and management of the public funds, when fome of the richer members, intending to contribute their fortunes to the common fupport of the fociety, fold their possessions, and laid down the prices at the apostles' feet. Yet so infensible, or undefirous, were they of the advantage which that confidence afforded, that, we find, they very foon difpoled of the truft, by putting it into the hands, not of nominees of their own, but of ftewards formally elected for the purpose by the society at large. We may add alfo, that this excefs of generofity, which cast private property into the public stock, was fo far from being required by the apostles, or imposed as a law of Christianity, that Peter reminds Ananias that he had been guilty, in his behaviour, of an officious and voluntary prevarication; for whilft, fays he, thy eftate remained unfold, " was it not thine own? and, after it was fold, was it not in thine own power?"

#### F 4 Hitherto

[ 72 ]

Hitherto the preachers of the new religion feem to have had the common people on their fide; which is affigned as the reafon why the Jewish rulers did not, at this time, think it prudent to proceed to greater extremities. It was not long, however, before the enemies of the inftitution found means to represent it to the people as tending to fubvert their law, degrade their lawgiver, and dishonour their temple\*. And thefe infinuations were disperfed with fo

much fuccefs, as to induce the people to join with their fuperiors in the ftoning of a very active member of the new community.

The death of this man was the fignal of a general perfecution, the activity of which may be judged of from one anecdote of the time: "As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison." This perfecution † raged at Jerusa-

> \* Acts vi. 12. † Acts viii. 3. lem

## [ 73 ]

Iem with fo much fury, as to drive\* moft of the new converts out of the place, except the twelve apoftles. The converts, thus "fcattered abroad," preached the religion wherever they came: and their preaching was, in effect, the preaching of the *twelve*; for it was fo far carried on in concert and correspondence with *them*, that, when they heard of the fuccess of their emissaries in a particular country, they fent two of their number to the place to complete and con-

#### firm the miffion.

An event now took place of great importance in the future hiftory of the religion. The † perfecution which had begun at Jerufalem, followed the Chriftians to other cities, in which the authority of the Jewifh

\* Acls viii. 1. "And they were all feattered abroad;" but the term "all" is not, I think, to be taken strictly, or as denoting more than the generality; in like manner as in Acts ix. 35. "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron faw him, and turned to the Lord."

† Acts ix.

## 74

Sanhedrim over those of their own nation was allowed to be exercifed. A young man, who had fignalifed himfelf by his hoftility to the profession, and had procured a commission from the council at Jerusalem to seize any converted Jews whom he might find at Damafcus, fuddenly became a profelyte to the religion which he was going about to extirpate. The new convert not only fhared, upon this extraordinary change, the fate of his companions, but brought upon himself a double measure of enmity from the party which he had left. The Jews at Damascus, upon his return to that city, watched the gates night and day with fo much diligence, that he escaped from their hands only by being let down in a bafket by the wall. Nor did he find himfelf in greater fafety at Jerusalem, whither he immediately repaired. Attempts were there also foon fet on foot to deftroy him; from the danger of which he was preferved by being fent away to Cilicia, his native country.

For some reason, nor mentioned, perhaps not

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not known, but probably connected with the civil hiftory of the Jews, or with fome danger\* which engroffed the public attention, an intermission about this time took place in the fufferings of the Christians. This happened, at the most only feven or eight, perhaps only three or four, years after Chrift's death. Within which period, and notwithstanding that the late perfecution occupied part of it, churches, or focieties of believers, had been formed in all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; for we read that the churches in these countries " had now rest. and were edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoft, were multiplied †." The original preachers of the religion did not remit their

\* Dr. Lardner (in which he is followed alfo by Dr. ! Benfon) afcribes this collation of the perfecution of the Chriftians to the attempt of Caligula to fet up his own ftatue in the Temple of Jerufalem, and to the confternation thereby excited in the minds of the Jewish people; which confternation for a feason sufpended every other contest.

† Acts ix. 31.

labours

## [ 76 ]

labours or activity during this feation of quietness; for we find one, and he a very principal perfon amongst them, passing throughout all quarters. We find also those who had been before expelled from Jerufalem by the perfecution which raged there, travelling as far as Phœnice, Cyprus, and Antioch \*; and, lastly, we find Jerusalem again the centre of the miffion, the place whither the preachers returned from their feveral excursions, where they reported the conduct and effects of their ministry, where questions of public concern were canvassed and fettled, from whence directions were fought, and teachers fent forth.

The time of this tranquillity did not, however, continue long. Herod Agrippa, who had lately acceded to the government of Judea, " ftretche: l forth his hand to vex certain of the church '." He began his cruelty by beheading one of the twelve original apostles, a kinsman and constant compa-

> + Acts xii. 1. \* Acts xi. 19.

> > nion

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# • [ 77 ]

nion of the founder of the religion. Perceiving that this execution gratified the Jews, he proceeded to feize, in order to put to death, another of the number ; and him, like the former, affociated with Chrift during his life, and eminently active in the fervice fince his death. This man was, however, delivered from prifon, as the account flates \*, miraculoufly, and made his efcape from Jerufalem.

Thefe things are related, not in the gene-

ral terms under which, in giving the outlines of the hiftory, we have here mentioned them, but with the utmost particularity of names, perfons, places, and circumstances; and, what is deferving of notice, without the smallest discoverable propensity in the historian to magnify the fortitude, or exaggerate the fufferings, of his party. When they fied for their lives, he tells us. When they churches had rest, he remarks it. When the people took their part, he does not leave it without notice. When the aposses were

\* Acts xii. 3-17.

carried

## 78 ]

carried a fecond time before the Sanhedrin, he is careful to observe that they were brought without violence. When milder councils were fuggested, he gives us the author of the advice, and the speech which contained it. When, in consequence of this advice, the rulers contented themfelves with threatening the apostles, and commanding them to be beaten with stripes, without urging at that time the perfecution farther, the historian candidly and distinctly records their forbearance. When, therefore, in other instances, he states heavier perfecutions, or actual martyrdoms, it is reasonable to believe that he flates them because they were true; and not from any with to aggravate, in his account, the fufferings which Chriftians fustained, or to extol, more than it deferved, their patience under them.

Our hiltory now purfues a narrower path. Leaving the reft of the apoftles, and the original affociates of Chrift, engaged in the propagation of the new faith (and who there is not the least reason to believe abated in

their



## [ 79 ]

their diligence or courage), the narrative proceeds with the separate memoirs of that eminent teacher, whole extraordinary and fudden conversion to the religion, and corresponding change of conduct, had before been circumstantially described. This perfon, in conjunction with another, who appeared amongst the earliest members of the fociety at Jerufalem, and amongst the immediate adherents \*\* of the twelve apostles, fet out from Antioch upon the express business of carrying the new religion through the various provinces of the leffer Afia +. During this expedition we find, that in almost every place to which they came, their perfons were infulted, and their lives endangered. After being expelled from Antioch in Pisidia, they repaired to Iconium <sup>‡</sup>. At Iconium an attempt was made to ftone them. At Lyftra, whither they fied from Iconium, one of them aclually was floned, and drawn out of the city for dead §. These two men, though not themselves original apostles, were acting

* Acts iv. 36.	† Acts xiii. 2.
‡ Acts xiii. 50.	§ Acts xiv. 5.

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in connection and conjunction with the original apostles; for, after the completion of their journey, being fent upon a particular commission to Jerusalem, they there related to the apoftles \* and elders the events and fuccels of their ministry, and were, in return, recommended by them to the churches, "as men who had hazarded their lives in the caufe."

The treatment which they had experien-

ced in the first progress, did not deter them from preparing for a fecond. Upon a difpute, however, arifing between them, but not connected with the common fubject of their labours, they acted as wife and fincere men would act; they did not retire in difguft from the fervice in which they were engaged, but, each devoting his endeavours to the advancement of the religion, they parted from one another, and fet forwards upon separate routes. The history goes along with one of them; and the fecond enterprife to him was attended with the

\* Acts xv. 12-26.

fame

# [ 8i ]

fame dangers and perfecutions as both had met with in the first. The apostle's travels hitherto had been confined to Afia. He now croffes, for the first time, the Ægean Sea, and carries with him, amongst others, the perfon whole accounts fupply the information we are stating<sup>\*</sup>. The first place in Greece at which he appears to have ftopped was Philippi in Macedonia. Here himfelf and one of his companions were cruelly whipped, caft into prison, and kept there under the most rigorous custody, being thrust, whilst yet fmarting with their wounds, into the inner dungeon, and their feet made fast in the flocks. Notwithstanding this unequivocal specimen of the usage which they had to look for in that country, they went forward in the execution of their errand. After paffing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Theffalonica; in which city the house in which they lodged was affailed by a party of their enemies, in order to bring them out to the

\* Acts xvi. 11. † V. 23, 24. 33. Vol. I., G populace,

### [ 82 ]

populace. And when, fortunately for their prefervation, they were not found at home, the master of the house was dragged before the magistrate for admitting them within his doors \*. Their reception at the next city was fomething better; but neither here had they continued long before their turbulent adversaries, the Jews, excited against them fuch commotions amongst the inhabitants, as obliged the apostle to make his escape by a private journey to Athenst. The extremity of the progress was Corinth. His abode in this city, for some time, seems to have been without molestation. At length, however, the Jews found means to fir up an infurrection against him, and to bring him before the tribunal of the Roman prefident ‡. It was to the contempt which that magiftrate entertained for the Jews and their controversies, of which he accounted Christianity to be one, that our apostle owed his deliverance §.

\* Acts xvii. 1-5. + V. 13. ‡ Acts xviii. 12. § V. 18.

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This indefatigable teacher, after leaving Corinth, returned by Ephefus into Syria; and again visited Jerufalem; and the fociety of Christians in that city, which, as hath been repeatedly observed, still continued the centre of the miffion\*. It fuited not, however, with the activity of his zeal to remain long at Jerufalem. We find him going from thence to Antioch, and, after fome flay there, traverfing once more the northern provinces of Afia Minort. This progress ended at Ephefus; in which city the apostle continued in the daily exercise of his ministry two years, and until his fuccefs, at length, excited the apprehensions of those who were interefted in the fupport of the national worfhip. Their clamour produced a tumult, in which he had nearly lost his life<sup>‡</sup>. Undifinayed, however, by the dangers to which he faw himfelf exposed, he was driven from Ephefus only to renew his labours in Greece §. After paffing over Macedonia, he thence

\* Acts xviii. 22. + V. 23. + Acts xix. 1. 9, 10. § V. 29. 31. G 2 proceeded

#### [ 84 ]

 $\mathbf{v}$ 

proceeded to his former station at Corinth\*. When he had formed his defign of returning by a direct course from Corinth into Syria, he was compelled by a confpiracy of the Jews, who were prepared to intercept him on his way, to trace back his fteps through Macedonia to Philippi, and from thence to take shipping into Afia. Along the coaft of Afia he purfued his voyage with all the expedition he could command, in order to reach Jerufalem against the feast of Pentecost<sup>†</sup>. His reception at Jerusalem was of a piece with the usage he had experienced from the Jews in other places. He had been only a few days in that city when the populace, inftigated by fome of his old opponents in Afia, who attended this feaft, feized him in the temple, forced him out of it, and were ready immediately to have deftroyed him, had not the fudden prefence of the Roman guard refcued him out of their handst. The officer, however, who had thus feafonably interposed, acted from his

\* Acts xix. 1. + V. 16. ± Acts xxi. 27-33.

Care

## [ 85 ]

care of the public peace, with the prefervation of which he was charged, and not from any favour to the apoftle, or indeed any difpolition to exercise either justice or humanity towards him; for he had no fooner secured his person in the fortress, than he was proceeding to examine him by torture \*.

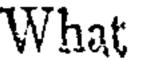
From this time to the conclusion of the hiftory, the apoftle remains in public cuftody of the Roman government. After elcaping affaffination by a fortunate difcovery of the plot, and delivering himfelf from the influence of his enemies by an appeal to the audience of the emperor +, he was fent, but not until he had fuffered two years imprifonment, to Rome ‡. He reached Italy after a tedious voyage, and after encountering in his paffage the perils of a defperate fhipwreck §. But although ftill a prifoner, and his fate ftill depending, neither the various and long continued fufferings which he had

- \* Acts xxii. 12. 24, † Acts xxv. 9. 11. # Acts xxiv. 27. § Acts xxvii.
  - G 3 undergone,

#### [ 86 ]

undergone, nor the danger of his prefent fituation, deterred him from perfifting in preaching the religion; for the hiftorian clofes the account by telling us, that, for two years, he received all that came unto him in his own hired houfe, where he was permitted to dwell with a foldier that guarded him, " preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jefus Chrift, with all confidence."

Now the hiftorian, from whom we have drawn this account, in the part of his narrative which relates to St. Paul, is fupported by the ftrongeft corroborating teftimony that a hiftory can receive. We are in poffeffion of letters written by St. Paul himfelf upon the fubject of his miniftry, and either written during the period which the hiftory comprifes, or, if written afterwards, reciting and referring to the tranfactions of that period. Thefe letters, without borrowing from the hiftory, or the hiftory from them, unintentionally confirm the account which the hiftory delivers in a great variety of particulars.



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What belongs to our prefent purpole is the description exhibited of the apostle's fufferings: and the reprefentation, given in the hiftory, of the dangers and diffreffes which he underwent, not only agrees, in general, with the language which he himfelf uses whenever he speaks of his life or ministry, but is also, in many inftances, attefted by a specific correfpondency of time, place, and order of events. If the hiftorian puts down in his narrative that at Philippi the apostle "was beaten with many stripes, cast into prison, and there treated with rigor and indignity\*," we find him, in a letter i to a neighbouring church, reminding his converts, that, " after he had fuffered before, and was fhamefully entreated at Philippi, he was bold, neverthelefs, to fpeak unto them (to whole city he next came) the Gofpel of God." If the hiftory relate ‡, that, at Theffalonica, the house in which the apoftle was lodged, when he first came to that place, was affaulted by the populace, and the mafter of it dragged be-

\* Acts xvi. 24. † 1 Theff. ii. 2. ‡ Acts xvii. 57.

G<sub>4</sub>

fore

[ 88 ]

fore the magiftrate for admitting fuch a gueft within his doors, the apostle, in his letters to the Christians of Thessalonica, calls to their remembrance "how they had received the Gospel in much affliction\*." If the history deliver an account of an infurrection at Ephefus, which had nearly cost the apostle his life, we have the apostle himself, in a letter written a short time after his departure from that city, describing his despair, and returning thanks for his deliverance +. If the hiftory inform us, that the apostle was expelled from Antioch in Pifidia, attempted to be stoned at Iconium, and actually stoned at Lystra, there is preferved a letter from him to a favourite convert, whom, as the fame hiftory tells us, he first met with in these parts; in which letter he appeals to that disciple's knowledge " of the perfecutions which befel him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lyftra ‡." If the hiftory make the apoftle, in his fpeech to the Ephesian elders, remind them, as one

\* I Theff. i. 6. 4 Acts xix. 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. ‡ Acts 2, iii. 50. xix. 5, 19. 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11.



# [ 89 ]

proof of the difinterestedness of his views, that, to their knowledge, he had supplied his own and the necessities of his companions by perfonal labour\*, we find the same apoftle, in a letter written during his residence at Ephesus, afferting of himself, "that even to that hour he laboured, working with his own hands j."

These coincidences, together with many relative to other parts of the apostle's history,

and *all* drawn from independent fources, not only confirm the truth of the account, in the particular points as to which they are obferved, but add much to the credit of the narrative in all its parts; and fupport the author's profession of being a contemporary of the perfon whose history he writes, and, throughout a material portion of his narrative, a companion.

What the epifiles of the apofiles declare of the fuffering flate of Chriftianity, the writ-

\* Acts xx. 34. + 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12.

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ings which remain of their companions and immediate followers expressly confirm.

Clement, who is honourably mentioned by St. Paul in his epiftle to the Philippians\*, hath left us his attestation to this point in the following words: "Let us take (fays he) the examples of our own age. Through zeal and envy the most faithful and righteous pillars of the church have been perfecuted even to the most grievous deaths. Let us fet before our eyes the holy apostles. Peter, by unjust envy, underwent, not one or two, but many fufferings; till at last being martyred, he went to the place of glory that was due unto him. For the fame caufe did Paul, in like manner, receive the reward of his patience. Seven times he was in bonds; he was whipped, was frond; he preached both in the east and in the west, leaving behind him the glorious report of his faith; and fo having taught the whole world righteoufnefs, and for that end travelled even

\* Philip. iv. 3.

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unto the utmost bounds of the west, he at last fuffered martyrdom by the command of the governors, and departed out of the world, and went unto his holy place, being become a most eminent pattern of patience unto all ages. To these holy apostles were joined a very great number of others, who, having through envy undergone, in like manner, many pains and torments, have left a glorious example to us. For this, not only men, but women, have been perfecuted; and, having suffered very grievous and cruel punishments, have finished the course of their faith with firmness "."

Hermas, faluted by St. Paul in his Epiftle to the Romans, in a piece very little connected with hiftorical recitals, thus fpeaks :--" Such as have believed and fuffered death for the name of Chrift, and have endured with a ready mind, and have given up their lives with all their hearts  $\dagger$ ."

\* Clem. ad Cor. c. v. vi. Abp. Wake's tranf. † Shepherd of Hermas, c. xxviii.

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Polycarp, the disciple of John, though all that remains of his works be a very fhort epistle, has not left this subject unnoticed.---"I exhort (fays he) all of you, that ye obey the word of righteoufnefs, and exercise all patience, which ye have feen fet forth before your eyes, not only in the bleffed Ignatius, and Lorimus and Rufus, but in others among yourselves, and in Paul himself and the rest of the apostles; being confident in this, that all these have not run in vain, but in faith. and righteoufnefs; and are gone to the place that was due to them from the Lord, with whom also they fuffered. For they loved not this present world, but him who died and was raifed again by God for us \*."

Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, recognifes the fame topic, briefly indeed, but politively and precifely. "For this caufe (*i. e.* for having felt and handled Chrift's body after his refurrection, and being convinced, as Ignatius expresses it, both by his

# Pol. ad Phil. c. ix.

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flesh and spirit), they (*i. c.* Peter, and those who were present with Peter at Christ's appearance) despised death, and were found to be above it \*."

Would the reader know what a perfecution in these days was, I would refer him to a circular letter, written by the church of Smyrna foon after the death of Polycarp, who, it will be remembered, had lived with St. John; and which letter is entitled a relation of that bishop's martyrdom. " The fufferings (fay they) of all the other martyrs were bleffed and generous, which they underwent according to the will of God. For fo it becomes us, who are more religious than others, to afcribe the power and ordering of all things unto him. And indeed who can choose but admire the greatness of their minds, and that admirable patience and love of their master, which then appeared in them? who, when they were fo flayed with whipping, that the frame and structure of

🌁 19 Ep. Smyr. c. iii.

their

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their bodies were laid open to their very inward veins and arteries, neverthelefs endured it. In like manner, thofe who were condemned to the beafts, and kept a long time in prifon, underwent many cruel torments, being forced to lie upon fharp fpikes laid under their bodies, and tormented with divers other forts of punifhments; that fo, if it were poffible, the tyrant, by the length of their fufferings, might have brought them to deny Chrift\*."

\* Rel. Mor. Pol. c. ii.

#### CHAP.

#### A

#### VIEW

OF THE

#### EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN THREE PARTS.

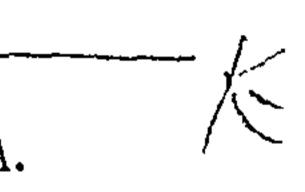
PART I. Of the direct Hiftorical Evidence of Christianity, and wherein it is diffinguished from the Evidence alledged

for other Miracles.

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PART II. Of the Auxiliary Evidences of Christianity.

PART III. A brief Confideration of fome popular Objections.



BY WILLIAM PALEY, M. A. ARCHDEACON OF CARLISLE.

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M.DCCC.

#### [ 95 ]

#### CHAP. V.

There is fatisfactory evidence that many, profeffing to have been original witneffes of the Christian miracles, paffed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in confequence of their belief of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the fame motives, to new rules of conduct.

U PON the hiftory, of which the laft chapter contains an abftract, there are a few obfervations which it may be proper to make, by way of applying its teftimony to the particular propositions for which we contend.

I. Although our fcripture hiftory leaves the general account of the apoftles in an early part of the narrative, and proceeds with the feparate account of one particular apofile,

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apostle, yet the information which it delivers fo far extends to the reft, as it flews the nature of the service. When we see one apostle fuffering perfecution in the discharge of his commission, we shall not believe, without evidence, that the fame office could, at the fame time, be attended with eafe and fafety to others. And this fair and reasonable inference is confirmed by the direct attestation of the letters, to which we have fo often referred. The writer of these letters not only alludes, in numerous passages, to his own fufferings, but fpeaks of the reft of the apofiles as enduring like fufferings with himfelf. "I think that God hath fet forth us the apofles last, as it were, appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men-even unto this prefent hour, we both hunger and thirft, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we blefs; being perfecuted, we fusser it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things 8 unto

## [ 97 ]

tinto this day "." Add to which, that in the short account that is given of the other apolles, in the former part of the hiltory, and within the fhort period which that account comprises, we find, first, two of them feized, imprisoned, brought before the Sanhedrim, and threatened with further punishment +; then, the whole number imprisoned and beaten 1: foon afterwards, one of their adherents floned to death, and fo hot a perfecution raifed against the fect, as to drive most of them out of the place; a short time only fucceeding, before one of the twelve was beheaded, and another fentenced to the fame fate; and all this paffing in the fingle city of Jerufalem, and within ten years after the founder's death, and the commencement of the inflitution.

II. Secondly: We take no credit at preient for the miraculous part of the narrative, nor do we infift upon the correctness of fingle passages of it. If the whole story be not a novel, a romance; the whole action a " I Cor. iv. et feq. + Acts iv. 3. 21. ‡ Acts v. 18. 40. Vol. I. H dream;

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dream; if Peter, and James, and Paul, and the reft of the apoftles mentioned in the account, be not all imaginary perfons; if their letters be not all forgeries, and, what is more, forgeries of names and characters which never exifted; then is there evidence in our hands fufficient to fupport the only fact we contend for (and which, I repeat again, is, in itfelf, highly probable), that the original followers of Jefus Chrift exerted great endeavours to propagate his religion, and underwent great labours, dangers, and fufferings, in confequence of their undertaking.

III. The general reality of the apoftolic hiftory is ftrongly confirmed by the confideration, that it, in truth, does no more than affign adequate caufes for effects which certainly were produced, and defcribe confequences naturally refulting from fituations which certainly exifted. The *effects* were certainly there, of which this hiftory fets forth the caufe, and origin, and progrefs. It is acknowledged on all hands, becaufe it

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is recorded by other testimony than that of the Christians themselves, that the religion began to prevail at that time, and in that country. It is very difficult to conceive how it could begin, or prevail at all, without the exertions of the founder and his followers in propagating the new perfua-The hiftory now in our hands fion. defcribes these exertions, the perfons employed, the means and endeavours made use of, and the labours undertaken in the profecution of this purpose. Again, the treatment which the hiftory represents the first propagators of the religion to have experienced, was no other than what naturally refulted from the fituation in which they were confessedly placed. It is admitted that the religion was adverse, in a great degree, to the reigning opinions, and to the hopes and wifhes of the nation to which it was first introduced; and that it overthrew, fo far as it was received, the eftablished theology and worship of every other country. We cannot feel much reluctance in believing that, when the mellengers of fuch a fystem H 2 went

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went about not only publishing their opinions, but collecting profelytes, and forming regular focicties of prefelytes, they fhould meet with oppofition in their attempts, or that this oppofition fhould fometimes proceed to fatal extremities. Our hiftory details examples of this oppofition, and of the fufferings and dangers which the emiffaries of the religion underwent, perfectly agreeable to what might reafonably be expected, from the nature of their undertaking, compared with the character of the age and country in which it was carried on.

IV. Fourthly: The records before us fupply evidence of what formed another member of our general proposition, and what, as hath already been observed, is highly probable, and almost a necessary confequence of their new profession, viz. that, together with activity and courage in propagating the religion, the primitive followers of Jefus assumed, upon their conversion, a new and peculiar course of private life. Immediately after their master was withdrawn



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from them, we hear of their " continuing with one accord in prayer and fupplication \*;" of their " continuing daily with one accord in the temple †;" of "many being gathered together praying ‡." We know what strift injunctions were laid upon the converts by their teachers. Wherever they came, the first word of their preaching was, "Repent !" We know that these injunctions obliged them to refrain from many fpecies of licentioufnefs, which were not, at that time, reputed criminal. We know the rules ] of purity, and the maxims of benevolence, which Christians read in their books; concerning which rules, it is enough to obferve, that, if they were, I will not fay completely obeyed, but in any degree regarded, they would produce a fystem of conduct, and, what is more difficult to preferve, a difpofition of mind, and a regulation of affections, different from any thing to which they had hitherto been accuftomed, and different from what they would fee in others. The change

\* Acts i. 14.  $\frac{1}{4}$  Acts ii. 46.  $\frac{1}{4}$  Acts xii. 12. H 3 and

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and distinction of manners, which refulted from their new character, is perpetually referred to in the letters of their teachers. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and fins, wherein in times *past* ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of difobedience; among whom alfo we had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the defires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others \*."-" For the time haft of our life may fuffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot +." St. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, after enumerating, as his manner was, a catalogue of vicious characters, adds, "Such were some

Eph. ii. 1-3. See also Tit. iii. 3. + 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.

of

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of you, but ye are washed, but ye are fanctified \*." In like manner, and alluding to the fame change of practices and fentiment, he afks the Roman Chriftians "what fruit ' they had in those things whereof they are now ashamed †?" The phrases which the fame writer employs to defcribe the moral condition of Christians, compared with their condition before they became Christians, fuch as "newnefs of life," being "freed from fin," being "dead to fin ;" " the destruction of the body of fin, that, for the future, they should not ferve fin ;" " children of light and of the day," as opposed to "children of darkness and of the night," " not fleeping as others," imply, at leaft, a new fyftem of obligation, and, probably, a new feries of conduct, commencing with their conversion.

The teffimony which Pliny bears to the behaviour of the new fect in his time, and which teffimony comes not more than fifty

> \* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † Rom. vi. 21. H 4 years

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years after that of St. Paul, is very applicable to the fubject under confideration. The character which this writer gives of the Chriftians of that age,'and which was drawn from a pretty accurate enquiry, because he confidered their moral principles as the point in which the magistrate was interested, is as follows :---He tells the emperor, " that fome of those who had relinquished the fociety, or who, to fave themfelves, pretended that they had relinquished it, affirmed that they were wont to meet together, on a stated day, before it was light, and fung among themfelves alternately a hymn to Chrift as a God; and to bind themfelves, by an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, but that they would not be guilty of theft or robbery, or adultery; that they would never falhfy their word, or deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it." This proves that a morality, more pure and firict than was ordinary, prevailed at that time in Christian focieties. And to me it appears, that we are authorifed to carry this teffimony back to the age of



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the apoftles; becaufe it is not probable that the immediate hearers and difciples of Chrift were more relaxed than their fucceffors in Pliny's time, or the miffionaries of the religion than those whom they taught.

#### CHAP.

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#### CHAP. VI.

There is satisfactory evidence, that many, professing to have been original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and folely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

W HEN we confider, first, the prevalency of the religion at this hour; fecondly, the only credible account which can be given of its origin, viz. the activity of the founder and his affociates; thirdly, the opposition which that activity must naturally have excited; fourthly, the fate of the founder of the religion, attefted by heathen writers as well as our own; fifthly, the testimony of the same writers to the sufferings of Christians, either contemporary with, or immediately fucceed-

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ing, the original settlers of the inflitution; fixthly, predictions of the fufferings of his followers afcribed to the founder of the religion, which afcription alone proves, either that fuch predictions were delivered and fulfilled, or that the writers of Chrift's life were induced by the event to attribute fuch predictions to him; seventhly, letters now in our possession, written by some of the principal agents in the transaction, referring exprefsly to extreme labours, dangers, and fufferings, fustained by themselves and their companions; lastly, a history purporting to be written by a fellow traveller of one of the new teachers, and, by its unfophisticated correspondency with letters of that perfonstill extant, proving itself to be written by fome one well acquainted with the fubject of the narrative, which hiftory contains accounts of travels, perfecutions, and martyrdoms, answering to what the former reasons lead us to expect; when we lay together thefe confiderations, which, taken feparately, are, I think, correctly fuch as I have flated them in the preceding chapters, there cannot much doubt

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#### [ 108 ]

doubt remain upon our minds, but that a number of perfons at that time appeared in the world, publicly advancing an extraordinary ftory, and, for the fake of propagating the belief of that flory, voluntarily incurring great perfonal dangers, traverfing feas and kingdoms, exerting great industry, and fuftaining great extremities of ill ulage and perfecution. It is also proved that the fame persons, in confequence of their perfuasion or pretended persuasion of the truth

of what they afferted, entered upon a course of life in many respects new and fingular.

From the clear and acknowledged parts of the cafe, I think it to be likewife in the higheft degree probable, that the flory, for which these perfons voluntarily exposed themselves to the fatigues and hardships which they endured, was a miraculous ftory; I mean, that they pretended to miraculous evidence of some kind or other. They had nothing elfe to ftand upon. The defignation of the perfon, that is to fay, that Jefus of Nazareth, rather than any other perfon, was

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the Meffiah, and as fuch the fubject of their ministry, could only be founded upon supernatural tokens attributed to him. Here were no victories, no conquests, no revolutions, no furprifing elevation of fortune, no achievements of valour, of ftrength, or of policy, to appeal to; no difcoveries in any art or science, no great efforts of genius or learning to produce. A Galilean peafant was denounced to the world as a divine lawgiver. A young man of mean condition, of a private and fimple life, and who had wrought no deliverance for the Jewish nation, was declared to be their Messiah. This, without afcribing to him at the fame time fome proofs of his miffion, (and what other but fupernatural proofs could there be?) was too absurd a claim to be either imagined, or attempted, or credited. In whatever degree, or in whatever part, the religion was argumentative, when it came to the question, " Is the carpenter's fon of Nazareth the perfon whom we are to receive and obey?" there was nothing but the miracles attributed to him, by which his pretentions could be main-

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maintained for a moment. Every controverfy and every question must presuppose these; for, however such controversies, when they did arife, might, and naturally would, be discussed upon their own grounds of argumentation, without citing the miraculous evidence which had been afferted to attend the founder of the religion (which would have been to enter upon another, and a more general question), yet we are to bear in mind, that without previoufly fuppofing the existence or the pretence of fuch evidence, there could have been no place for the discussion of the argument at all. Thus, for example, whether the prophecies, which the Jews interpreted to belong to the Meffiah, were, or were not, applicable to the history of Jesus of Nazareth, was a natural fubject of debate in those times : and the debate would proceed, without recurring at every turn to his miracles, because it set out with fuppoling thefe; inafmuch as without miraculous marks and tokens (real or pretended), or without fome fuch great change effected by his means in the public condi-

## [ 111 ]

tion of the country, as might have fatisfied the then received interpretation of these prophecies, I do not fee how the question could ever have been entertained. Apollos, we read, " mightily convinced the Jews, fhewing by the fcriptures that Jefus was Chrift\*;" but unless Jesus had exhibited fome diffinction of his perfon, fome proof of fupernatural power, the argument from the old fcriptures could have had no place. It had nothing to attach upon. A young man calling himfelf the fon of God, gathering a crowd about him, and delivering to them lectures of morality, could not have excited fo much as a doubt amongst the Jews whether he was the object in whom a long feries of ancient prophecies terminated, from the completion of which they had formed fuch magnificent expectations, and expectations of a nature fo opposite to what appeared : I mean, no fuch doubt could exift when they had the whole cafe before them, when they faw him put to death for his officiousness, and when by

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his death the evidence concerning him was closed. Again, the effect of the Messiah's coming, fuppoling Jefus to have been him, upon Jews, upon Gentiles, upon their relation to each other, upon their acceptance with God, upon their duties and their expectations; his nature, authority, office, and agency; were likely to become subjects of much confideration with the early votaries of the religion, and to occupy their attention and writings. I should not, however, expect that in these disquisitions, whether preserved in the form of letters, speeches, or set treatifes, frequent or very direct mention of his miracles would occur. Still miraculous evidence lay at the bottom of the argument. In the primary queftion, miraculous pretenfions, and miraculous pretenfions alone, were what they had to rely upon.

That the original ftory was miraculous, is very fairly alfo inferred from the miraculous powers which were laid claim to by the Chriftians of fucceeding ages. If the accounts of thefe miracles be true, it was a

## [ I13 ]

continuation of the fame powers; if they be falfe, it was an imitation, 1 will not fay, of what had been wrought, but of what had been reported to have been wrought, by those who preceded them. That imitation fhould follow reality; fiction be grafted upon truth; that, if miracles were performed at first, miracles should be pretended afterwards, agrees fo well with the ordinary course of human affairs, that we can have no great difficulty in believing it The contrary fupposition is very improbable, namely, that miracles should be pretended to by the followers of the apostles and first emission of the religion, when none were pretended to, either in their own perfons or that of their master, by these apostles and emissaries themfelves,

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#### CHAP. VII.

There is satisfactory evidence, that many, profeffing to have been original witneffes of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and fufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, "and folely in confequence of their belief of the truth of those

accounts; and that they alfo fubmitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

IT once then being proved, that the first propagators of the Christian institution did exert great activity, and fubject themfelves to great dangers and fufferings, in confequence, and for the fake of an extraordinary, and I think we may fay, of a miraculous ftory of fome kind or other; the next great queftion is, Whether the account, which our fcriptures contain, be that flory; that which these men delivered, and for which they acted and fuffered as they did?



## [ IÍ5 ]

This question is, in effect, no other than, whether the ftory which Christians have nove, be the flory which Christians had *then*? And of this the following proofs may be deduced from general confiderations, and from confiderations prior to any enquiry into the particular reasons and testimonies by which the authority of our hiftories is fupported.

In the first place, there exists no trace or veftige of any other ftory. It is not, like the death of Cyrus the Great, a competition between opposite accounts, or between the credit of different historians. There is not a document, or fcrap of account, either contemporary with the commencement of Chriftianity, or extant within many ages after that commencement, which affigns a hiftory fubftantially different from ours. The remote, brief, and incidental notices of the affair, which are found in heathen writers, fo far as they do go, go along with us. They bear testimony to these facts: that the institution originated from Jesus; that the

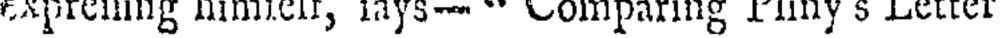
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founder was put to death, as a malefactor, at Jerufalem, by the authority of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate; that the religion nevertheless spread in that city, and throughout Judea; and that it was propagated from thence to diftant countries; that the converts were numerous; that they fuffered great hardships and injuries for their profeffion; and that all this took place in the age of the world which our books have affigned. They go on further, to defcribe the manners  $\Gamma$ of Christians in terms perfectly conformable to the accounts extant in our books; that they were wont to affemble on a certain day; that they fung hymns to Chrift as to a god; that they bound themfelves by an oath not to commit any crime, but to abftain from theft and adultery, to adhere ftrictly to their promifes, and not to deny money deposited in their hands\*; that they worihipped him who was crucified in Paleftine; that this their first law-giver had taught them that they were all brethren; that they had

\* Vide Pliny's Letter. Bonnet, in his lively way of expressing himself, fays-" Comparing Pliny's Letter





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had a great contempt for the things of this world, and looked upon them as common; that they flew to one another's relief; that they cherished ftrong hopes of immortality; that they defpifed death, and furrendered themfelves to fufferings \*." This is the account of writers who viewed the fubject at a great diffance; who were uninformed and uninterefted about it. It bears the charac-

with the account in the Acts, it feems to me that I had

not taken up another author, but that I was still reading the historian of that extraordinary fociety." This is strong; but there is undoubtedly an affinity, and all the affinity that could be expected.

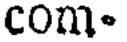
\* " It is incredible what expedition they ufe when any of their friends are known to be in trouble. In a word, they fpare nothing upon fuch an occafion—for thefe naferable men have no doubt they fhall be immortal, and live forever: therefore they contemn death, and many furrender themfelves to fufferings. Moreover, their first law-giver has taught them that they are all brethren, when once they have turned and renounced the gods of the Greeks, and worfhip this mafter of theirs who was crucified, and engage to live according to his laws. They have alfo a fovereign contempt for all the things of this world, and look upon them as common." Lucian. de Morte Peregrini, t. i. p. 565. ed. Grav.



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ters of such an account upon the face of it, becaufe it describes effects, namely, the appearance in the world of a new religion, and the conversion of great multitudes to it, without descending, in the smallest degree, to the detail of the transaction upon which it was founded, the interior of the inftitution, the evidence or arguments offered by those who drew over others to it. Yet still here is no contradiction of our flory; no other or different story set up against it; but fo far a confirmation of it, as that, in the general points upon which the heathen account touches, it agrees with that which we find in our own books.

The fame may be observed of the very few Jewish writers, of that and the adjoining period, which have come down to us. Whatever they omit, or whatever difficulties we may find in explaining the omiffion, they advance no other hiftory of the tranfaction than that which we acknowledge. Josephus, who wrote his Antiquities, or Hiftory of the Jews, about fixty years after the



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commencement of Christianity, in a passage generally admitted as genuine, makes mention of John under the name of John the Baptift; that he was a preacher of virtue; that he baptifed his profelytes; that he was well received by the people; that he was imprifoned and put to death by Herod; and that Herod lived in a criminal cohabitation with Herodias his brother's wife \*. In another paffage, allowed by many, although not without confiderable question being moved about it, we hear of "James, the brother of him who was called Jefus, and of his being put to death †." In a third paffage, extant in every copy that remains of Jofephus's hiftory, but the authenticity of which has neverthelefs been long difputed, we have an explicit teffimony to the fubftance of our hiftory in these words :-- " At that time lived Jefus, a wife man, if he may be called a man, for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher of fuch

\* Antiq. l. xviii. cap. v. fect. 1, 2.

+ Antiq. I. xx. cap. ix. fest, r.

14 men

#### [ 120 ]

men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles. This was the Chrift; and when Pilate, at the infligation of the chief men among us, had condemned him to the crofs, they who before had conceived an affection for him did not cease to adhere to him; for on the third day he appeared to them alive again, the divine prophets having foretold thefe and many wonderful things concerning him. And the fect of the Christians, fo called from him, fubfilts to this time "." Whatever become of the controverly concerning the genuinenels of this pallage; whether Jole hus go the whole length of our hiftory, which, if the paffage be fincere, he does; or whether he proceed only a very little way with us, which, if the paffage be rejected, we confess to be the case; still what we allerted is true, that he gives no other or different hiftory of the fubject from ours, no other or different account of the origin of the inflution. And I think alfo

\* Antiq. 1. xviii. cap. iii. fect. 3.

that

#### [ 121 ]

that it may with great reason be contended, either that the paffage is genuine, or that the filence of Josephus was designed. For, although we should lay aside the authority of our own books entirely, yet when Tacitus, who wrote not twenty, perhaps not ten, years after Josephus, in his account of a period in which Josephus was near thirty years of age, tells us, that a vaft multitude of Christians were condemned at Rome; that they derived their denomination from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death, as a criminal, by the procurator Pontius Pilate; that the fuperflition had spread not only over Judea, the fource of the evil, but had reached Rome also :----when Suetonius, an historian contemporary with Tacitus, relates that, in the time of Claudius, the Jews were making disturbances at Rome, Chreftus being their leader; and that, during the reign of Nero, the Chriftians were punished; under both which emperors Jofephus lived :- when Pliny, who wrote his celebrated epille not more than thirty years after the publication of Josephus's hiftory.

#### [ I22 ]

hiftory, found the Chriftians in fuch numbers in the province of Bithynia as to draw from him a complaint, that the contagion had feized cities, towns, and villages, and had fo feized them as to produce a general defertion of the public rites; and when, as hath already been observed, there is no reason for imagining that the Christians were more numerous in Bithynia than in many other parts of the Roman empire: it cannot, I fhould suppose, after this, be believed, that the religion, and the transaction upon which it was founded, were too obfcure to engage the attention of Josephus, or to obtain a place in his hiftory. Perhaps he did not know how to reprefent the bufinefs, and disposed of his difficulties by passing it over in filence. Eusebius wrote the life of Confantine, yet omits entirely the most remarkable circumftance in that life, the death of his fon Crifpus; undoubtedly for the reafon liere given. The referve of Josephus upon the fubject of Christianity appears also in his paffing over the banifhment of the Jews by Claudius, which Suetonius, we have feen, has

#### [ 123 ]

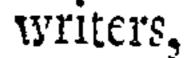
has recorded with an express reference to Chrift. This is at leaft as remarkable as his filence about the infants of Bethlehem\*. Be, however, the fact, or the caufe of the omiffion in Josephus<sup>+</sup>, what it may, no other or different hiftory on the fubject has been given by him, or is pretended to have been given.

But farther; the whole feries of Chriftian

\* Michaelis has computed, and, as it fhould feem, fairly enough, that probably not more than twenty children perifhed by this cruel precaution. Michael. Introd. to the N. Tefl. translated by Marsh. Vol. I. c. ii. fect. 11.

† There is no notice taken of Chriftianity in the Mifhna, a collection of Jewifh traditions compiled about the year 18c, although it contains a Tract " De cultu peregrino," Of ftrange or idolatrous worfhip; yet it cannot be difputed but that Chriftianity was perfectly well known in the world at this time. There is extremely little notice of the fubject in the Jerufalem Talmud, compiled about the year 30c, and not much more in the Babylonifh Talmud, of the year 500, although both thefe works are of a religious nature, and although, when the firft was compiled, Chriftianity was upon the point of becoming the religion of the ftate, and, when the latter was publifhed, had been fo for 200 years.

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writers, from the first age of the institution down to the present, in their discussions, apologies, arguments, and controversies, proceed upon the general ftory which our feriptures contain, and upon no other. The main facts, the principal agents, are alike in all. This argument will appear to be of great force, when it is known that 'we are able to trace back the feries of writers to a contact with the hiftorical books of the New Teftament, and to the age of the first emilfaries of the religion, and to deduce it, by an unbroken continuation, from that end of the train to the prefent.

The remaining letters of the apoftles (and what more original than their letters can we have?), though written without the remotest defign of transmitting the hiftory of Chrift, or of Christianity, to future ages, or even of making it known to their contemporaries, incidentally difclofe to us the following circumftances: " Christ's descent and family, his innecence, the meekness and gentleness of his character (a recognition which goes

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### [ 125 ]

to the whole gofpel hiftory), his exalted nature, his circumcifion, transfiguration, his life of oppofition and fuffering, his patience and refignation, the appointment of the eucharift and the manner of it, his agony, his confession before Pontius Pilate, his ftripes, crucifixion, burial, refurrection, his appearance after it, first to Peter, then to the rest of the apostles, his afcension into heaven, and his defignation to be the future judge of mankind : the stated residence of the apofiles at Jerufalem, the working of miracles by the first preachers of the gospel, who were also the hearers of Chrift\* : the fuccelsful

\* Heb. ii. 3. " How shall we escape if we neglect fo great falvation, which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with figns and would also bearing them witness, both with figns and would also bearing them witness, and gifts of the Holy Gh. it?" I alledge this epistle without hesitation, for, whatever doubts may have been raised about its author, there can be none concerning the age in which it was written. No epistle in the collection carries about it more indubitable marks of antiquity than this does. It speaks, for instance, throughout, of the temple as then flanding, and of the worship of the tem-

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## [ 126 ]

ful propagation of the religion, the perfecution of its followers, the miraculous converfion of Paul, miracles wrought by himfelf, and alledged in his controverfies with his adverfaries, and in letters to the perfons amongft whom they were wrought; finally, that MIRACLES were the figns of an apofile \*.

In an epiftle bearing the name of Barnabas the companion of Paul, probably genuine, certainly belonging to that age, we have the fufferings of Chrift, his choice of apoftles and their number, his paffion, the fcarlet robe, the vinegar and gall, the mocking and piercing, the caffing lots for his coat †, his

ple as then fublifting.—Heb. viii. 4. "For, if he were on earth, he fhould not be a prieft, feeing there are priefts that offer according to the law."—Again, Heb. xiii. 10. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which *ferve* the tabernacle."

\* 2 Cor. xii. 12. "Truly the figns of an apofile were wrought among you in all patience, in figns and wonders, and mighty deeds."

+ Ep. Bar. c. vii.

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#### [ 127 ]

refurrection on the eighth (*i. e.* the first day of the week<sup>\*</sup>), and the commemorative diftinction of that day, his manifestation after his refurrection, and lastly, his afcension. We have also his miracles generally but pofitively referred to in the following words: "finally teaching the people of Israel, and doing many wonders and figns among them, he preached to them, and shewed the exceeding great love which he bare towards them †."

In an epiftle of Clement, a hearer of St. Paul, although written for a purpofe remotely connected with the Chriftian hiftory, we have the refurrection of Chrift, and the fubfequent miffion of the apoftles, recorded in these fatisfactory terms: "The apoftles have preached to us from our Lord Jefus Chrift from God—For, having received their command, and being *thoroughly affured by the refurrection of our Lord Jefus Chrift*, they went abroad, publifting that the kingdom of God was at hand ‡. We find noticed alfo,

\* Ep. Bar. c. vi. † Ibid. c. v.
‡ Ep. Clem. Rom. c. xlií.

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### [ 128 ]

the humility, yet the power of Chrift\*, his defcent from Abraham, his crucifixion. We have Peter and Paul reprefented as faithful and righteous pillars of the Church, the numerous fufferings of Peter, the bonds, ftripes, and ftoning of Paul, and more particularly his extensive and unwearied travels.

In an epiftle of Polycarp, a difciple of St. John, though only a brief hortatory letter, we have the humility, patience, fufferings, refurrection, and afcenfion of Chrift, together with the apoftolic character of St. Paul, diftinctly recognized  $\ddagger$ . Of this fame father we are alfo affured by Irenæus, that he (Irenæus) had heard him relate, "what he had received from eye-witneffes concerning the Lord, both concerning bis miracles and his doctrine  $\ddagger$ ."

In the remaining works of Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, larger than those

> \* Ep. Clem. Rom. c. xvi. † Pol. Ep. ad Phil. c. v. viii. ii. iii. ‡ Ir. ad Flor. ap. Euf. l. v. c. 20.

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## [ I29 ]

of Polcyarp (yet, like those of Polycarp, treating of subjects in no wife leading to any recital of the Christian history), the occafional allusions are proportionably more numerous. The descent of Christ from David, his mother Mary, his miraculous conception, the ftar at his birth, his baptifm by John, the reafon affigned for it, his appeal to the prophets, the ointment poured on his head, his fufferings under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch; his refurrection, the Lord's day called and kept in commemoration of it, and the Eucharift, in both its parts, are unequivocally referred to. Upon the refurrection this writer is even circumstantial. He mentions the apoftles eating and drinking with Chrift after he was rifen, their feeling and their handling him; from which last circumstance Ignatius raises this just reflection -" They believed, being convinced both by his flesh and spirit; for this cause they despifed death, and were found to be above it. \*"

\* Ad Smyr. c. iii.

Vol. I.

Quadratus,



#### [ :130 ]

our times \*."

Juftin Martyr came little more than thirty years after Quadratus. From Juftin's works, which are ftill extant, might be collected a tolerably complete account of Chrift's life, in all points agreeing with that which is delivered in our fcriptures; taken indeed, in a great meafure, from those fcriptures, but ftill proving that this account, and no other, was the account known and extant in that age. The miracles in particular, which

\* Ap. Euf. H. E. I. iv. c. 3.

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## T31 ]

form the part of Chrift's hiftory most material to be traced, stand fully and distinctly recognized in the following paffage :--- "He healed those who had been blind, and deaf, and lame, from their birth, caufing, by his word, one to leap, another to hear, and a third to fee; and by raifing the dead, and making them to live, he induced, by his works, the men of that age to know him\*."

It is unneceffary to carry these citations lower, because the history, after this time, occurs in ancient Christian writings as familiarly as it is wont to do in modern fermons; occurs always the fame in fubftance, and always that which our evangelists reprefent.

This is not only true of those writings of Christians which are genuine, and of acknowledged authority, but it is, in a great measure, true of all their ancient writings which remain; although fome of these may have been errotheoully afcribed to authors to

\* Juft. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 288. ed. Thirl.



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### [ 132 ]

whom they did not belong, or may contain false accounts, or may appear to be undeferving of credit, or never indeed to have obtained any. Whatever fables they have mixed with the narrative, they preferve the material parts, the leading facts, as we have them; and, fo far as they do this, although they be evidence of nothing elfe, they are evidence that these points were fixed, were received and acknowledged by all Christians in the ages in which the books were written. At least, it may be afferted, that, in the places where we were most likely to meet with fuch things, if fuch things had exifted, no reliques appear of any ftory fubstantially different from the present, as the cause, or as the pretence, of the inftitution.

Now that the original ftory, the ftory delivered by the first preachers of the institution, fhould have died away fo entirely as to have left no record or memorial of its existence, although fo many records and memorials of the time and transaction remain; and that another ftory fhould have ftepped into



#### T 133

its place, and gained exclusive possession of the belief of all who professed themselves disciples of the institution, is beyond any example of the corruption of even oral tradition, and still less confistent with the experience of written hiftory : and this improbability, which is very great, is rendered ftill greater by the reflection, that no fuch change, as the oblivion of one ftory and the fubftitution of another, took place in any future period of the Christian æra. Christianity hath travelled through dark and turbulent ages; nevertheles it came out of the cloud and the ftorm, fuch, in fubstance, as it entered in. Many additions were made to the primitive hiftory, and these entitled to different degrees of credit; many doctrinal errors also were from time to time grafted into the public creed, but still the original ftory remained, and remained the fame. In all its principal parts it has been fixed from the beginning.

Thirdly, The religious rites and ufages that prevailed amongst the early disciples of K 3 Christianity,

#### [ I34 ]

Christianity, were fuch as belonged to, and fprung out of, the narrative now in our hands; which accordancy fhews, that it was the narrative upon which these perfons acted, and which they had received from their teachers. Our account makes the founder of the religion direct that his disciples should be baptized : we know that the first Chriftians were baptized. Our account makes him direct that they fhould hold religious assemblies: we find that they did hold religious affemblies. Our accounts make the apofiles affemble upon a flated day in the week: we find, and that from information perfectly independent of our accounts, that the Chriftians of the first century did observe stated days of affembling. Our histories record the inflitution of the rite which we call the Lord's Supper, and a command to repeat it in perpetual fucceffion: we find, amongft the early Christians, the celebration of this rite universal. And indeed we find concurring in all the above-mentioned observances, Christian societies of many different nations and languages, removed from one another.

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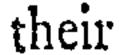
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by great diffance of place and diffimilitude of fituation. It is also extremely material to remark, that there is no room for infinuating that our books were fabricated with a fludious accommodation to the usages which obtained at the time they were written; that the authors of the books found the ulages eftablished, and framed the flory to account for their original. The fcripture accounts, especially of the Lord's Supper, are too short and curfory, not to fay too

obscure, and, in this view, deficient, to allow a place for any fuch fulpicion \*."

Amongst the proofs of the truth of our proposition, viz. that the story, which we have now, is, in fubstance, the ftory which the Christians had then, or, in other words, that the accounts in our gospels are, as to

\*. The reader who is converfant in these researches, by comparing the fhort feripture accounts of the Chriftian rites above mentioned with the minute and circumftantial directions contained in the pretended apoftolical conftitutions, will see the force of this observation; the difference between truth and forgery.





# [ 136 ]

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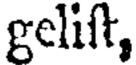
their principal parts at least, the accounts which the apostles and original teachers of the religion delivered, one arifes from obferving, that it appears by the gospels themfelves, that the ftory was public at the time; that the Christian community was already in pofferion of the fubftance and principal parts of the narrative. The gospels were not the original caufe of the Christian hiftory being believed, but were themfelves among the confequences of that belief. This is expressly affirmed by St. Luke in his brief, but, as I think, very important and instructive preface. "Forafmuch (fays the evangelist) as many have taken in hand to fet forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among st us, even as they delivered them unto us, which, from the beginning, were eye-witneffes and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me alfo, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mighteft know the certainty of those things wherein thou haft been instructed."-

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# 1 137

This short introduction testifies, that the fubstance of the history, which the evangelist was about to write, was already believed by Christians; that it was believed upon the declarations of eye-witneffes and minifters of the word; that it formed the account of their religion, in which Christians were inftructed; that the office which the hiftorian proposed to himself, was to trace each particular to its origin, and to fix the certainty of many things which the reader had before heard of. In St. John's Gospel, the same point appears from hence, that there are fome principal facts, to which the hiftorian refers, but which he does not relate. A remarkable inftance of this kind is the alcention, which is not mentioned by St. John in its place, at the conclusion of his history, but which is plainly referred to in the following words of the fixth chapter\*: "What and if ye shall fee the Son of man afcend up where he was before?" And still more positively in the words which Chrift, according to our evan-

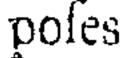
\* Alfo John iii. 13. and xvi. 28.



# [ I38 ]

gelist, spoke to Mary after his refurrection, " Touch me not, for I am not yet alcended. to my Father; but go unto my brethren, and fay unto them, I afcend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God\*." This can only be accounted for by the fuppolition, that St. John wrote under a fenfe of the notoriety of Christ's alcention, amongst those by whom his book was likely to be read. The fame account must also be given of St. Matthew's omiffion of the fame important fact. The thing was very well known, and it did not occur to the hiftorian that it was neceffary to add any particulars concerning it. It agrees also with this folution, and with no other, that neither Matthew nor John difpofes of the person of our Lord in any manner whatever. Other intimations in St. John's Gospel of the then general notoriety of the ftory are the following: His manner of introducing his narrative, (ch. i. ver. 15.) " John bare witnels of him, and cried, faying," evidently prefup-

\* John xx. 17.



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pofes that his readers knew who John was. His rapid parenthetical reference to John's imprisonment, " for John was not yet caft into prifon\*," could only come from a writer whofe mind was in the habit of confidering John's impriforment as perfectly notorious. The defcription of Andrew by the addition "Simon Peter's brother +," takes it for granted that Simon Peter was well known. His name had not been mentioned before. The evangelist's noticing ‡ the prevailing mifconstruction of a difcourse, which Christ held with the beloved difciple, proves that the characters and the difcourse were already public. And the obfervation which thefe inftances afford, is of equal validity for the purpole of the prefent argument, whoever were the authors of the hiftories.

THESE four circumstances, first, the recognition of the account in its principal parts by a feries of fucceeding writers; fecondly, the total absence of any account of the origin of

<sup>4</sup> John iii. 24. 7 Ibid. i. 40. 7 Ibid. xxi. 24.

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# I 40 ]

the religion substantially different from ours; thirdly, the early and extensive prevalence of rites and inflitutions, which refult from our account; fourthly, our account bearing, in its construction, proof that it is an account of facts, which were known and believed at the time, are fufficient, I conceive, to fupport an affurance, that the flory which we have now, is, in general, the ftory which Christians had at the beginning. I fay in general; by which term I mean, that it is the fame in its texture, and in its principal facts. For instance, I make no doubt, for the reasons above stated, but that the refurrection of the founder of the religion was always a part of the Christian story. Nor can a doubt of this remain upon the mind of any one, who reflects that the refurrecvion is, in some form or other, afferted, referred to, or affumed, in every Christian writing, of every description, which hath come down to us.

And if our evidence ftopped here, we should have a strong cafe to offer: for we fhould

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fhould have to alledge, that, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, a certain number of persons fet about an attempt of effablishing a new religion in the world; in the profecution of which purpose, they voluntarily encountered great dangers, undertook great labours, sustained great sufferings, all for a miraculous ftory which they published wherever they came; and that the refurrection of a dead man, whom, during his life, they had followed and accompanied, was a conftant part of this ftory. I know nothing in the above statement which can, with any appearance of reason, be disputed: and I know, nothing in the hiftory of the human species similar to it.

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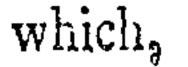
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#### CHAP. VIII.

There is fatisfactory evidence, that many persons, professing to have been original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and folely in confequence of their belief of the . truth of those accounts; and that they also fubmitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.

THAT the ftory which we have now is, in the main, the ftory which the apostles published, is, I think, nearly certain from the confiderations which have been proposed. But whether, when we come to the particulars and the detail of the narrative, the hiftorical books of the New Teflament be deferving of credit as histories, so that a fact ought to be accounted true because it is found in them; or whether they are entitled to be confidered as reprefenting the accounts,



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which, true or falle, the apoftles published; whether their authority, in either of these views, can be trusted to, is a point which neceffarily depends upon what we know of the books, and of their authors.

Now, in treating of this part of our argument, the first, and a most material, observation upon the fubject is, that fuch was the fituation of the authors to whom the four gofpels are afcribed, that, if any one of the four be genuine, it is sufficient for our pur-The received author of the first was pofe. an original apoftle and emiffary of the reli-The received author of the fecond gion. was an inhabitant of Jerufalem at the time, to whole house the apostles were wont to refort, and himfelf an attendant upon one of the most eminent of that number. The received author of the third was a flated companion and fellow traveller of the moft active of all the teachers of the religion, and in the courfe of his travels frequently in the fociety of the original apoftles. The received author of the fourth, as well as of the first,

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was one of these apostles. No stronger evidence of the truth of a hiftory can arife from the fituation of the historian than what is here offered. The authors of all the hiftories lived at the time, and upon the fpot. The authors of two of the hiftories were prefent at many of the feenes which they deferibe; eye-witness of the facts, ear-witness of the difcourfes; writing from perfonal knowledge and recollection; and, what firengthens their testimony, writing upon a fubject in which their minds were deeply engaged, and in which, as they must have been very frequently repeating the accounts to others, the paffages of the hiftory would be kept continually alive in their memory. Whoever reads the gofpels (and they ought to be read for this particular purpose) will find in them not merely a general affirmation of miraculous powers, but detailed circumstantial accounts of miracles, with specifications of time, place, and perfons; and these accounts many and various. In the gospels, therefore, which bear the name of Matthew and John, these narratives, if they really proceeded

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[ I45 ] ceeded from these men, must either be true, as far as the fidelity of human recollection is usually to be depended upon, that is, must be true in fubstance, and in their principal parts (which is fufficient for the purpofe of proving a fupernatural agency), or they must be wilful and meditated falfehoods. Yet the writers who fabricated and

uttered these falsehoods, if they be such, are of the number of those who, unless the whole contexture of the Christian ftory be a

dream, facrificed their ease and fafety in the caufe, and for a purpose the most inconsistent that is possible with dishonest intentions. They were villains for no end but to teach honefty, and martyrs without the least profpect of honour or advantage.

The gospels which bear the name of Mark and Luke, although not the narratives of eye-witnesse, are, if genuine, removed from that only by one degree. They are the narratives of contemporary writers, of writers themselves mixing with the busines, one of the two probably living in the place Vol. I. L which





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which was the principal scene of action, both living in habits of fociety and correspondence with those who had been present at the transactions which they relate. The latter of them accordingly tells us (and with apparent fincerity, becaufe he tells it without pretending to perfonal knowledge, and without claiming for his work greater authority than belonged to it), that the things, which were believed amongst Christians, came from those who from the beginning were eye-witneffes and ministers of the word; that he had traced up accounts to their fource; and that he was prepared to instruct his reader in the certainty of the things which he related<sup>#</sup>. Very few hiftories lie fo close to their facts; very few historians are so nearly connected with the fubject of their narrative,

\* Why fhould not the candid and modeft preface of this hiftorian be believed as well as that which Dion Caffius prefixes to his Life of Commodus? "Thefe things and the following I write not from the report of others, but from my own knowledge and obfervation." I fee no reafon to doubt but that both paffages deferibe truly enough the fituation of the authors.

#### [ **I**47 ]

or pollefs fuch means of authentic information, as thefe.

The fituation of the writers applies to the truth of the facts which they record. But at prefent we use their testimony to a point fomewhat fhort of this, namely, that the facts recorded in the gospels, whether true or falfe, are the facts, and the fort of facts, which the original preachers of the religion alledged. Strictly fpeaking, I am concerned only to fhew, that what the gofpels contain is the fame as what the apoftles preached. Now how flands the proof of this point? A fet of men went about the world publishing a story composed of miraculous accounts (for miraculous from the very nature and exigency of the cafe they must have been), and, upon the strength of these accounts, called upon mankind to quit the religions in which they had been educated, and to take up, from thenceforth, a new fystem of opinions, and new rules of action. What is more in attestation of these accounts, that is, in support of an institution of which L 2



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these accounts were the foundation, the fame men voluntarily exposed themselves to haraffing and perpetual labours, dangers, and fufferings. We want to know what thefe accounts were. We have the particulars, i. e. many particulars, from two of their own number. We have them from an attendant of one of the number, and who there is reafon to believe was an inhabitant of Jerufalem at the time. We have them from a fourth writer, who accompanied the most laborious missionary of the institution in his travels; who, in the course of these travels, was frequently brought into the fociety of the reft; and who, let it be observed, begins his narrative by telling us that he is about to relate the things which had been delivered by those who were ministers of the word and eye-witnesse of the fact. I do not know what information can be more fatisfactory than this. We may, perhaps, perceive the force and value of it more fenfibly, if we reflect how requiring we should have been if we had wanted it. Supposing it to be fufficiently proved, that the religion, now profeffed

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professed amongst us, owed its original to the preaching and ministry of a number of men, who, about eighteen centuries ago, set forth in the world a new fystem of religious opinions, founded upon certain extraordinary things which they related of a wonderful perfon who had appeared in Judea; suppose it to be also sufficiently proved, that, in the course and prosecution of their miniftry, these men had subjected themselves to extreme hardships, fatigue, and peril; but suppole the accounts which they published had not been committed to writing till fome ages after their times, or at least that no histories. but what had been composed fome ages afterwards, had reached our hands; we should have faid, and with reason, that we were willing to believe these men under the circumstances in which they delivered their teftimony, but that we did not, at this day, know with fufficient evidence what their teftimony was. Had we received the particulars of it from any of their own number, from any of those who lived and conversed with them, from any of their hearers, or even



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from any of their contemporaries, we fhould have had fomething to rely upon. Now, if our books be genuine, we have all thefe. We have the very fpecies of information which, as it appears to me, our imagination would have carved out for us, if it had been wanting.

But I have faid, that, if any one of the four gospels be genuine, we have not only direct historical testimony to the point we contend for, but testimony which, so far as that point is concerned, cannot reasonably be rejected. If the first gospel was really written by Matthew, we have the narrative of one of the number from which to judge what were the miracles, and the kind of miracles, which the apostles attributed to Jefus. Although, for argument's fake, and only for argument's fake, we should allow that this gofpel had been erroneoufly aferibed to Matthew; yet, if the gospel of St. John be genuine, the observation holds with no lefs strength. Again, although the gospels both of Matthew and John could be fupposed to be spurious, yet, if the gospel of St.



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Luke was truly the composition of that perfon, or of any perfon, be his name what it might, who was actually in the fituation in which the author of that gofpel profeffes himfelf to have been; or if the gofpel which bears the name of Mark really proceeded from him; we ftill, even upon the lowest fupposition, posses the accounts of one writer at least, who was not only contemporary with the aposses, but affociated with them in their ministry; which authority feems fufficient, when the question is fimply what it was which these aposses advanced.

I think it material to have this well noticed. The New Teftament contains a great number of diftinct writings, the genuinenefs of any one of which is almost fufficient to prove the truth of the religion : it contains, however, four diftinct histories, the genuinenefs of any one of which is perfectly fufficient. If, therefore, we must be confidered as encountering the risk of error in affigning the authors of our books, we are entitled to the advantage of so many fepa-

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rate probabilities. And although it fhould appear that fome of the evangelists had feen and used each other's works, this discovery, whilst it subtracts indeed from their character as testimonies strictly independent, diminishes, I conceive, little, either their separate authority, by which I mean the authority of any one that is genuine, or their mutual confirmation. For, let the most difadvantageous supposition possible be made concerning them; let it be allowed, what I should have no great difficulty in admitting, that-Mark compiled his hiftory almost entirely from those of Matthew and Luke; and let it alfo, for a moment, be supposed that these histories were not, in fact, written by Matthew and Luke; yet, if it be true that Mark, a contemporary of the apofiles, liv-· ing in habits of fociety with the apostles, a fellow-traveller and fellow-labourer with fome of them; if, I fay, it be true that this perfon made the compilation, it follows, that the writings from which he made it exifted in the time of the apostles, and not only fo, but that they were then in fuch effeem and credit

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credit that a companion of the apoftles formed a hiftory out of them. Let the gofpel of Mark be called an epitome of that of Matthew; if a perfon in the fituation in which Mark is deferibed to have been, actually made the epitome, it affords the ftrongest poffible attestation to the character of the original.

Again, parallelisms in sentences, in words, and in the order of words, have been traced out between the gospel of Matthew and that of Luke; which concurrence cannot eafily be explained otherwife than by fuppoling, either that Luke had confulted Matthew's hiftory, or, what appears to me in no wife incredible, that minutes of some of Christ's discourses, as well as brief memoirs of fome passages of his life, had been committed to writing at the time, and that fuch written accounts had by both authors been occasionally admitted into their histories. Either supposition is perfectly confiftent with the acknowledged formation of St. Luke's narrative, who profess not to write as an eye-witnefs, but to have investi-

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gated the original of every account which he delivers; in other words, to have collected them from fuch documents and teftimonies, as he, who had the best opportunities of making inquiries, judged to be authentic. Therefore, allowing that this writer allo, in some instances, borrowed from the gospel which we call Matthew's, and once more allowing, for the fake of ftating the argument, that that gospel was not the production of the author to whom we ascribe it; yet still we have, in St. Luke's gofpel, a hiftory given by a writer immediately connected with the transaction, with the witneffes of it, with the perfons engaged in it, and composed from materials which that perfon, thus fituated, deemed to be fafe fources of intelligence: in other words, whatever fuppofition be made concerning any or all the other gospels, if St. Luke's gospel be genuine, we have in it a credible evidence of the point which we maintain.

The gofpel according to St. John appears to be, and is on all hands allowed to be, an



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independent teftimony, ftrialy and properly fo called. Notwithstanding, therefore, any connection, or fupposed connection, between fome of the gospels, I again repeat, what I before faid, that, if any one of the four be genuine, we have, in that one, strong reafon, from the character and fituation of the writer, to believe that we possels the accounts which the original emiffaries of the religion delivered.

II. In treating of the written evidences of Christianity, next to their separate, we are to confider their aggregate authority. Now, there is in the evangelic hiftory a cumulation of teftimony which belongs hardly to any other hiftory, but which our habitual mode of reading the fcriptures fometimes causes us to overlook. When a passage, in any wife relating to the hiftory of Chrift, is read to us out of the epiftle of Clemens Romanus, the epißles of Ignatius, of Polycarp, or from any other writing of that age, we are immediately fenfible of the confirmation which it affords to the scripture account.



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Here is a new witnefs. Now, if we had been accuftomed to read the gofpel of Matthew alone, and had known that of Luke only as the generality of Christians know the writings of the apoftolical fathers, that is, had known that fuch a writing was extant and acknowledged; when we came, for the first time, to look into what it contained, and found many of the facts which Matthew recorded, recorded alfo there, many other facts of a fimilar nature added, and throughout the whole work the fame general feries of transactions stated, and the same general character of the perfon who was the fubject of the hiftory preferved, I apprehend that we fhould feel our minds ftrongly imprefied by this difcovery of fresh evidence. We should feel a renewal of the same sentiment in first reading the gospel of St. John. That of St. Mark' perhaps would strike us as an abridgment of the hiftory with which we were already acquainted; but we fhould naturally reflect, that if that hiftory was abridged by fuch a perfon as Mark, or by any perfon of fo early an age, it afforded one of

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of the highest possible attestations to the value of the work. This fucceffive disclosure of proof would leave us affured, that there must have been at least some reality in a - flory which, not one, but many, had taken in hand to commit to writing. The very existence of four separate histories would fatisfy us that the subject had a foundation; and when, amidst the variety which the different information of the different writers had supplied to their accounts, or which their different choice and judgment in felecting their materials had produced, we obferved many facts to fland the fame in all; of these facts, at least, we should conclude, that they were fixed in their credit and publicity. If, after this, we fhould come to the knowledge of a diffined hiftory, and that also of the fame age with the reft, taking up the fubject where the others had left it, and carrying on a narrative of the effects produced in the world by the extraordinary caufes of which we had already been informed, and which effects fubfilt at this day, we fhould think the reality of the original ftory in no

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little degree established by this supplement. If fublequent inquiries should bring to our knowledge, one after another, letters written by fome of the principal agents in the bufinefs, upon the bufinefs, and during the time of their activity and concern in it, affuming all along and recognizing the original ftory, agitating the queftions that arofe out of it, preffing the obligations which refulted from it, giving advice and directions to those who acted upon it; I conceive that we should find, in every one of these, a still further fupport to the conclusion we had formed. At prefent the weight of this fucceffive confirmation is, in a great measure, unperceived by us. The evidence does not appear to us what it is; for, being from our infancy accultomed to regard the New Teftament as one book, we fee in it only one teftimony. The whole occurs to us as a fingle evidence; and its different parts, not as diffinct attestations, but as different portions only of the fame. Yet in this conception of the subject we are certainly miltaken; for the very difcrepancies amongft the

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the feveral documents which form our volume, prove, if all other proof were wanting, that in their original composition they were feparate, and most of them independent productions.

If we difpose our ideas in a different order, the matter flands thus :--- Whilft the transaction was recent, and the original witneffes were at hand to relate it; and whilft the apofiles were bufied in preaching and travelling, in collecting disciples, in forming and regulating focieties of converts, in fupporting themfelves against opposition; whilst they exercised their ministry under the haraffings of frequent perfecution, and in a state of almost continual alarm, it is not probable that, in this engaged, anxious, and unfettled condition of life, they would think immediately of writing hiftories for the information of the public or of posterity\*. But

\* This thought occurred to Eufebius— " Nor were the Apoftles of Chrift greatly concerned about the writing of books, being engaged in a more excellent mini-

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But it is very probable, that emergencies might draw from fome of them occafional letters upon the subject of their mission, to converts, or to focieties of converts, with which they were connected; or that they might addrefs written difcourfes and exhortations to the disciples of the institution at large, which would be received and read with a refpect proportioned to the character of the writer. Accounts in the mean time would get abroad of the extraordinary things that had been paffing, written with different degrees of information and correctness. The extension of the Christian fociety, which could no longer be instructed by a perfonal intercourfe with the apostles, and the poffible circulation of imperfect or erroneous narratives, would foon teach fome amongst them the expediency of fending forth authentic memoirs of the life and doctrine of their mafter. When accounts appeared, au-

ftry, which is above all human power." Ecclef. Hift. 1. iii. c. 24. The fame confideration accounts also for the paucity of Christian writings in the first century of its æra.

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thorized by the name, and credit, and fituation of the writers, recommended or recognized by the apoftles and first preachers of the religion, or found to coincide with what the apostles and first preachers of the religion had taught, other accounts would fall into difuse and neglect; whilst these, maintaining their reputation (as, if genuine and well founded, they would do) under the test of time, inquiry, and contradiction, might be expected to make their way into the hands

of Christians of all countries of the world.

This feems the natural progrefs of the bufinefs; and with this the records in our poffeffion, and the evidence concerning them, correfpond. We have remaining, in the first place, many letters of the kind above defcribed, which have been preferved with a care and fidelity. answering to the respect with which we may suppose that fuch letters would be received. But as these letters were not written to prove the truth of the Christian religion, in the fense in which we regard that question; nor to convey informa-Vor. I. M

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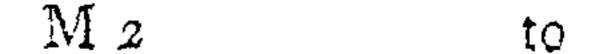
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tion of facts, of which those to whom the letters were written had been previoufly informed; we are not to look in them for any thing more than incidental allusions to the Christian history. We are able, however, to gather from these documents various particular attestations which have been already enumerated; and this is a species of written evidence, as far as it goes, in the higheft degree fatisfactory, and in point of time perhaps the first. But for our more circumstantial information we have, in the next place, five direct *histories*, bearing the names of persons acquainted, by their fituation, with the truth of what they relate, and three of them purporting, in the very body of the narrative, to be written by fuch perfons; of which books we know that fome were in the hands of those who were contemporaries of the apofiles, and that, in the age immediately posterior to that, they were in the hands, we may fay, of every one, and received by Christians with fo much respect and deference, as to be constantly quoted and referred to by them without any doubt of the truth

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truth of their accounts. They were treated as fuch histories, proceeding from fuch authorities, might expect to be treated. In the preface to one of our histories we have intimations left us of the existence of some ancient accounts which are now loft. There is nothing in this circumstance that can furprife us. It was to be expected, from the magnitude and novelty of the occasion, that fuch accounts would fwarm. When better accounts came forth, these died away. Our prefent histories superfeded others. They foon acquired a character and effablished a reputation which does not appear to have belonged to any other: that, at least, can be proved concerning them, which cannot be proved concerning any other.

But to return to the point which led to thefe reflections. By confidering our records in either of the two views in which we have reprefented them, we shall perceive that we posses a *collection of proofs*, and not a naked or folitary testimony; and that the written evidence is of such a kind, and comes



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to us in fuch a ftate, as the natural order and progrefs of things, in the infancy of the inftitution, might be expected to produce.

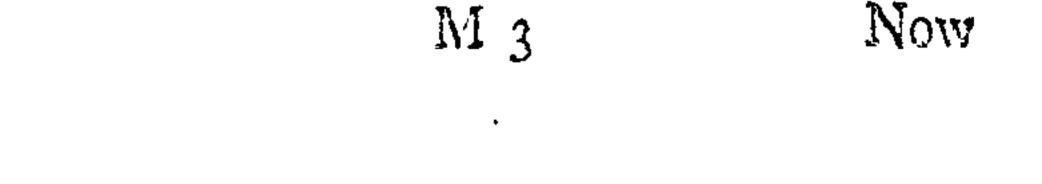
Thirdly: The genuineness of the historical books of the New Testament is undoubtedly a point of importance, because the ftrength of their evidence is augmented by our knowledge of the fituation of their authors, their relation to the subject, and the part which they suffained in the transaction;

and the teftimonies which we are able to produce, compose a firm ground of persuafion that the gospels were written by the perfons whose names they bear. Nevertheles, I must be allowed to state, that to the argument which I am endeavouring to maintain, this point is not effential; I mean, fo effential as that the fate of the argument depends upon it. The question before us is, whether the gospels exhibit the story which the apostles and first emission of the religion published, and *for* which they acted and fuffered in the manner in which, for some miraculous story or other, they did act and fuffer.

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fuffer. Now let us fuppose that we possessed no other information concerning these books than that they were written by early disciples of Christianity; that they were known and read during the time, or near the time, of the original apofiles of the religion; that by Christians whom the apostles instructed, by focieties of Christians which the apostles founded, thefe books were received (by which term "received" I mean that they were believed to contain authentic accounts of the transaction upon which the religion refted, and accounts which were accordingly ufed, repeated, and relied upon), this reception would be a valid proof that these books, whoever were the authors of them, must have accorded with what the apostles taught. A reception by the first race of Christians is evidence that they agreed with what the first teachers of the religion delivered. In particular, if they had not agreed with what the aposities themselves preached, how could they have gained credit in churches and focieties which the apostles established?



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Now the fact of their early existence, and not only of their existence but their reputation, is made out by fome ancient testimonies which do not happen to fpecify the names of the writers : add to which, what hath been already hinted, that two out of the four gospels contain averments in the body of the hiftory, which, though they do not disclose the names, fix the time and fituation of the authors, viz. that one was written by an eye-witnefs of the fufferings of Chrift, the other by a contemporary of the apostles. In the gospel of St. John, (xix. 35) after describing the crucifixion, with the particular circumfiance of piercing Christ's fide with a spear, the historian adds, as for himfelf, "and he that faw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he faith true, that ye might believe." Again, (xxi. 24.) after relating a conversation which paffed between Peter and the disciple, as it is there expressed, whom Jesus loved, it is added, "this is the difciple which testifieth of these things and wrote these things." This teffimony, let it be remarked,

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is not the lefs worthy of regard becaufe it is in one view imperfect. The name is not mentioned; which, if a fraudulent purpofe had been intended, would have been done. The third of our prefent gofpels purports to have been written by the perfon who wrote the Acts of the Apoftles; in which latter hiftory, or rather latter part of the fame hiftory, the author, by ufing in various places the first perfon plural, declares himfelf to have been a contemporary of all, and a companion of one of the original preachers of the religion.

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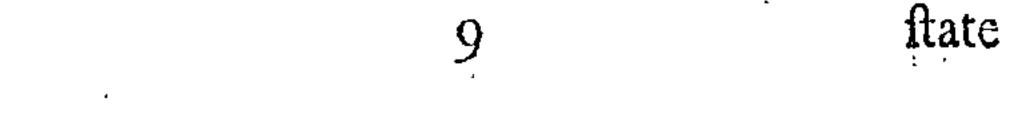
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#### CHAP. IX.

There is fatisfactory evidence, that many perfons, profeffing to be original witneffes of the Christian miracles, paffed their lives in labours, dangers, and fufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and folely in confequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the fame motives, to new rules of conduct.

" Of the Authenticity of the Scriptures."

NOT forgetting, therefore, what credit is due to the evangelic hiftory, fuppofing even any one of the four gofpels to be genuine; what credit is due to the gofpels, even fuppofing nothing to be known concerning them but that they were written by early difciples of the religion, and received with deference by early Christian churches; more efpecially not forgetting what credit is due to the New Teftament in its capacity of *cumulative* evidence; we now proceed to



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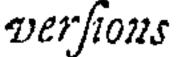
flate the proper and diffinct proofs, which fhow not only the general value of these records, but their fpecific authority, and the high probability there is that they actually came from the perfons whole names they bear.

There are, however, a few preliminary reflections, by which we may draw up with more regularity to the propolitions upon which the close and particular difcuffion of the fubject depends. Of which nature are the following:

I. We are able to produce a great number of ancient manuscripts, found in many different countries, and in countries widely diftant from each other, all of them anterior to the art of printing, some certainly seven or eight hundred years old, and fome which have been preferved probably above a thoufand years \*. We have also many ancient

\* The Alexandrian manufcript, now in the British Museum was written probably in the fourth or fifth century.

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verfions of these books, and some of them into languages which are not at prefent, nor for many ages have been, spoken in any part of the world. The existence of these manufcripts and verfions proves that the fcriptures were not the production of any modern contrivance. It does away alfo the uncertainty which hangs over fuch publications as the works, real or pretended, of Offian and Rowley, in which the editors are challenged to produce their manufcripts, and to show where they obtained their copies. The number of manufcripts, far exceeding those of any other book, and their wide difperfion, afford an argument, in fome meafure, to the fenfes, that the fcriptures anciently, in like manner as at this day, were more read and fought after than any other books, and that also in many different countries. The greatest part of spurious Christian writings are utterly loft, the reft preferved by fome fingle manufcript. There is weight also in Dr. Bentley's observation, that the New Teftament has fuffered lefs injury by the errors of transcribers than the works

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works of any profane author of the fame fize and antiquity; that is, there never was any writing in the prefervation and purity of which the world was fo interested or fo careful.

II. An argument of great weight with those who are judges of the proofs upon which it is founded, and capable, through their teftimony, of being addreffed to every underftanding, is that which arifes from the style and language of the New Teftament. It is just fuch a language as might be expected from the apostles, from persons of their age and in their fituation, and from no other perfons. It is the ftyle neither of claffic authors nor of the ancient Christian Fathers, but Greek coming from men of Hebrew origin; abounding, that is, with Hebraic and Syriac idioms, fuch as would naturally be found in the writings of men who used a language fpoken indeed where they lived, but not the common dialect of the country. This happy peculiarity is a ftrong proof of the genuinenels of these writings; for who fhould



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fhould forge them? The Christian Fathers were for the most part totally ignorant of Hebrew, and therefore were not likely to infert Hebraisms and Syriafms into their writings. The few who had a knowledge of the Hebrew, as Juffin Martyr, Origen, and Epiphanius, wrote in a language which bears no refemblance to that of the New Testament. The Nazarenes, who underftood Hebrew. used chiefly, perhaps almost entirely, the gofpel of St. Matthew, and therefore cannot be fulpected of forging the reft of the facred writings. The argument, at any rate, proves the antiquity of these books; that they belonged to the age of the apoftles; that they could be composed indeed in no other\*.

III. Why fhould we question the genuinenels of these books? Is it for that they contain accounts of fupernatural events? I apprehend that this, at the bottom, is the

\* See this argument stated more at large in Michaelis's Introduction (Marsh's translation), vol. I. c. ii. fec. 10. from which these observations are taken.

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real, though secret, cause of our hesitation about them; for, had the writings inferibed with the names of Matthew and John related nothing but ordinary hiftory, there would have been no more doubt whether these writings were theirs, than there is concerning the acknowledged works of Josephus or Philo; that is, there would have been no doubt at all. Now it ought to be confidered that this reafon, however it may apply to the credit which is given to a writer's judgment or veracity, affects the question of genuineness very indirectly. The works of Bede exhibit many wonderful relations; but who for that reafon doubts that they were written by Bede? The fame of a multitude of other authors. To which may be added, that we alk no more for our books than what we allow to other books in fome fort fimilar to ours. We do not deny the genuineness of the Koran. We admit that the hiftory of Apollonius Tyanzus, purporting to be written by Philostratus, was really written by Philostratus.

IV. If

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IV. If it had been an easy thing in the early times of the inflitution to have forged Christian writings, and to have obtained currency and reception to the forgeries, we fhould have had many appearing in the name of Chrift himfelf. No writings would have been received with fo much avidity and refpect as these; confequently none afforded fo great temptation to forgery. Yet have we heard but of one attempt of this fort deferving of the smallest notice, that in a piece of a very few lines, and fo far from fucceeding, I mean, from obtaining acceptance and reputation, or an acceptance and reputation in any wife fimilar to that which can be proved to have attended the books of the New Testament, that it is not fo much as mentioned by any writer of the three first centuries. The learned reader need not be informed that I mean the epiftle of Chrift to Abgarus, King of Edessa, found at present in the work of Eusebius\*, as a piece acknowledged by him, though not without confiderable doubt whether the whole paffage <sup>4</sup> Hift. Eccl. 1. i. c. 15.

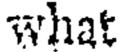
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be not an interpolation, as it is most certain, that after the publication of Eufebius's work this epiftle was univerfally rejected \*.

V. If the afcription of the gospels to their respective authors had been arbitrary or conjectural, they would have been afcribed to more eminent men. This observation holds concerning the three first gospels, the reputed authors of which were enabled, by their fituation, to obtain true intelligence, and were likely to deliver an honeft account of

\* Augustin, A. D. 395, (De Consens. Evang. c. 34.) had *heard* that the Pagans pretended to be possessed of an epistle from Christ to Peter and Paul; but he had never seen it, and appears to doubt of the existence of any fuch piece, either genuine or fpurious. No other ancient writer mentions it. He also, and he alone, notices, and that in order to condemn it, an epiftle ascribed to Christ by the Manichees, A. D. 270, and a fhort hymn attributed to him by the Prifcillianist, A. D. 378. (cont. Fauft. Man. lib. xxviii. c. 4.) The lateness of the writer who notices these things, the manner in which he notices them, and, above all, the filence of every preceding writer, render them unworthy of confideration.



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what they knew, but were perfons not diftinguished in the history by extraordinary marks of notice or commendation. Of the apoftles, I hardly know any one of whom lefs is faid than of Matthew; or of whom the little that is faid, is lefs calculated to magnify his character. Of Mark nothing is faid in the Gofpels; and what is faid of any perfon of that name in the Acts, and in the Epistles, in no part bestows praise or eminence upon him. The name of Luke is mentioned only in St. Paul's Epiftles\*, and that very transiently. The judgment, therefore, which affigned these writings to these authors proceeded, it may be prefumed, upon proper knowledge and evidence, and not upon a voluntary choice of names.

VI. Christian writers and Christian churches appear to have foon arrived at a very general agreement upon the fubject, and that without the interpolition of any public authority. When the diversity of opinion, which prevailed, and prevails among Chrif-

\* Col. iv. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 11. Philem. 24.



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tians in other points, is confidered, their concurrence in the canon of Scripture is remarkable, and of great weight, especially as it feems to have been the refult of private and free inquiry. We have no knowledge of any interference of authority in the queftion before the council of Laodicea in the year 363. Probably the decree of this council rather declared than regulated the public judgment, or, more properly fpeaking, the judgment of fome neighbouring churches; the council itfelf confifting of no more than thirty or forty bishops of Lydia and the adjoining countries<sup>\*</sup>. Nor does its authority feem to have extended farther; for we find numerous Christian writers, after this time, discussing the question, ".what books were entitled to be received as fcripture," with great freedom, upon proper grounds of evidence, and without any reference to the decifion at Laodicea.

\* Lardner's Cred. vol. viii. p. 291 et feq.

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THESE confiderations are not to be neglected : but of an argument concerning the genuineness of ancient writings, the substance undoubtedly and strength is ancient testi-

mony.

This tellimony it is neceflary to exhibit fomewhat in detail; for when Chriftian advocates merely tell us, that we have the fame reafon for believing the Gofpels to be written by the evangelifts whofe names they bear, as we have for believing the Commentaries to be Cæfar's, the Æneid Virgil's, or the Orations Cicero's, they content themfelves with an imperfect reprefentation. They flate nothing more than what is true, but they do not flate the truth correctly. In the number, variety, and early date of our teftimonies,

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teftimonies, we far exceed all other ancient books. For one, which the moft celebrated work of the moft celebrated Greek or Roman writer can alledge, we produce many. But then it is more requifite in our books, than in theirs, to feparate and diffinguish them from spurious competitors. The refult, I am convinced, will be fatisfactory to every fair inquirer; but this circumstance renders an inquiry neceffary.

In a work, however, like the prefent, there is a difficulty in finding a place for evidence of this kind. To purfue the detail of proofs throughout, would be to transcribe a great part of Dr. Lardner's eleven octavo volumes : to leave the argument without proofs, is to leave it without effect; for the perfuasion produced by this species of evidence depends upon a view and induction of the particulars which compose it.

The method which I propose to myself is, first, to place before the reader, in one view, the propositions which comprise the

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feveral heads of our tellimony, and afterwards, to repeat the fame propositions in fo many diffinct fections, with the neceffary authorities fubjoined to each \*.

The following, then, are the allegations upon the fubject, which are capable of being eftablished by proof:

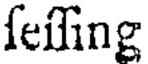
I. That the hiftorical books of the New Teftament, meaning thereby the four Gofpels and the Acts of the Apofiles, are quoted, or alluded to, by a feries of Chriftian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the apostles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular fuccession from their time to the prefent.

II. That when they are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted or alluded to with peculiar refpect, as books *fui generis*; as pof-

\* The reader, when he has the propositions before him, will observe that the argument, if he should omit the sections, proceeds connectedly from this point.

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feffing an authority which belonged to no other books, and as conclusive in all queftions and controversies amongst Christians:

III. That they were, in very early times, collected into a dictinct volume.

IV. That they were diffinguished by appropriate names and titles of respect.

V. That they were publicly read and expounded in the religious affemblies of the early Chriftians.

VI. That commentaries were written upon them, harmonies formed out of them, different copies carefully collated, and verfions of them made into different languages.

VII. That they were received by Chriftians of different fects, by many heretics as well as catholics, and ufually appealed to by both fides in the controverfies which arofe in those days.



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VIII. That the four Gofpels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, the first Epistle of John, and the first of Peter, were received, without doubt, by those who doubted concerning the other books which are included in our present canon.

IX. That the Gofpels were attacked by the early adversaries of Christianity, as books containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.

X. That formal catalogues of authentic fcriptures were published; in all which our prefent facred histories were included.

XI. That these propositions cannot be affirmed of any other books claiming to be books of scripture; by which are meant those books which are commonly called apocryphal books of the New Teftament.



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#### [ 183 ]

#### SECT. I.

The historical books of the New Testament, meaning thereby the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, are quoted, or alluded to, by a series of Christian writers, beginning with those who were contemporary with the apostles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present. 8

THE medium of proof stated in this propolition is, of all others, the most unquestionable, the least liable to any practices of fraud, and is not diminished by the lapse of ages. Bishop Burnet, in the History of his own Times, inserts various extracts from Lord Clarendon's History. One fuch infertion is a proof, that Lord Clarendon's Hiftory was extant at the time when Bilhop Burnet wrote, that it had been read by Bifhop





#### [ 184 ]

Burnet, that it was received by Bishop Burnet as a work of Lord Clarendon's, and alfo regarded by him as an authentic account of the transactions which it relates; and it will , be a proof of these points a thousand years hence, or as long as the books exift. Quintilian having quoted as Cicero's \*, that well known trait of diffembled vanity,

Si quid est in me ingenii, Judices, quod sentio quam sit exiguum-"

the quotation would be flrong evidence, were there any doubt, that the oration, which opens with this addrefs, actually came from Cicero's pen. Thefe instances, however fimple, may ferve to point out to a reader, who is little accustomed to fuch refearches, the nature and value of the argument.

The teftimonies which we have to bring forward under this proposition are the following:

I. There is extant an epifile afcribed to

\* Quint. lib. xi. c. 1.

Barnabas.

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Barnabas<sup>\*</sup>, the companion of Paul. It is quoted as the epiftle of Barnabas by Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 191; by Origen, A. D. 230. It is mentioned by Eufebius, A. D. 315, and by Jerome, A. D. 392, as an ancient work in their time, bearing the name of Barnabas, and as well known and read amongft Chriftians, though not accounted a part of Scripture. It purports to have been written foon after the deftruction of Jerufalem, during the calamities which followed that difafter; and it bears the character of the age to which it profefies to belong.

In this epifile appears the following remarkable paflage:—" Let us, therefore, beware left it come upon us, as it is written, There are many called, few chosen." From the expression, "as it is written," we infer with certainty, that, at the time when the

\* Lardner's Cred. ed. 1755, vol. i. p. 23 et feq. The reader will observe from the references, that the materials of these fections are almost entirely extracted from Dr. Lardner's work—my office confisted in arrangement and felection.

- author

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author of this epiftle lived, there was a book extant, well known to Christians, and of authority amongst them, containing these words--" Many are called, few chofen." Such a book is our prefent Gofpel of St. Matthew, in which this text is twice found\*, and is found in no other book now known. There is a farther observation to be made upon the terms of the quotation. The writer of the epifile was a Jew. The phrafe " it is written" was the very form in which the Jews quoted their fcriptures. It is not probable therefore, that he would have used this phrase, and without qualification, of any books but what had acquired a kind of fcriptural authority. If the paffage remarked in this ancient writing had been found in one of St. Paul's epistles, it would have been efteemed by every one a high teffimony to St. Matthew's gospel. It ought, therefore, to be remembered, that the writing in which it is found was probably by very few years posterior to those of St. Paul.

\* Mat. xx. 16. xxii. 14.



#### [ 187 ]

Befide this paffage, there are alfo in the epiftle before us feveral others, in which the fentiment is the fame with what we meet with in St. Matthew's gofpel, and two or three in which we recognize the fame words. In particular, the author of the epiftle repeats the precept, "Give to every one that afketh thee\*;" and faith that Chrift chofe as his apoftles, who were to preach the gofpel, men who were great finners, that he might fhew that he came " not to call the righteous, but finners, to repentance ‡."

II. We are in poffeffion of an epiftle written by Clement, Bishop of Rome ‡, whom ancient writers, without any doubt or feruple, affert to have been the Clement whom St. Paul mentions, Phil. iv. 3, " with *Clement* alfo, and other my fellow labourers, whofe names are in the book of life." This epiftle is spoken of by the ancients as an epiftle acknowledged by all; and, as Irenzus

- \* Mat. v. 42. + Ib. ix. 13.
- ; Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 62 et seq.



#### [ 188 ]

well reprefents its value, " written by Clement, who had feen the bleffed apoftles and converfed with them, who had the preaching of the apofiles still founding in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes." It is addreffed to the church of Corinth; and what alone may seem almost decisive of its authenticity, Dionyfius, Bilhop of Corinth, about the year 170, *i. c.* about eighty or ninety years after the epifile was written, bears witnefs, " that it had been wont to be read in that church from ancient times."

This epiftle affords, amongst others, the following valuable paffages:--" Efpecially remembering the words of the Lord Jefus which he fpake, teaching gentlenefs and long fuffering; for thus he faid \*: Be ye

\* " Bleffed are the merciful, for they fhall obtain mercy." Mat. v. 7.--" Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given unto you." Luke vi. 37, 38.—" Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye fhall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Mat. vii. 2.

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## [ 189 ]

merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven unto you; as you do, fo shall it be done unto you; as you give, fo shall it be given unto you; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye shew kindnefs, fo shall kindnefs be shewn unto you; with what meafure ye mete, with the fame it shall be measured to you. By this command, and by these rules, let us establish ourfelves, that we may always walk obediently to his holy words."

Again: "Remember the words of the Lord Jefus, for he faid, Wo to that man by whom offences come; it were better for him that he had not been born, than that he should offend one of my elect; it were better for him that a mill-ftone fhould be tied about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the fea, than that he should offend one of my little ones "."

#### In

\* Mat. xviii. 6. " But whofe fhall offend one of thefe little ones which believe in me, it were better foi him that a mill-flone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea." The latter part of the paf-



# [ 190 ]

In both these passages we perceive the high refpect paid to the words of Chrift as recorded by the evangelists : " Remember the words of the Lord Jefus-by this command and by these rules let us establish ourselves, that we may always walk obediently to his holy words." We perceive also in Clement a total unconfcioufness of doubt, whether thefe were the real words of Chrift, which are read as fuch in the gospels. This observation indeed belongs to the whole feries of teftimony, and efpecially to the most ancient part of it. Whenever any thing now read in the gofpels, is met with in an early Chriftian writing, it is always obferved to ftand there as acknowledged truth, i. e. to be introduced without hefitation, doubt, or apology. It is to be observed also, that as this epiftle was written in the name of the church of Rome, and addreffed to the church of Corinth, it ought to be taken as exhibiting

fage in Clement agrees more exactly with Luke xvii. 2. " It were better for him that a mill-flone were hanged about his neck, and he caft into the fea, than that he fhould offend one of thefe little ones."

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#### [ 191 ]

the judgment not only of Clement, who drew up the letter, but of these churches themselves, at least as to the authority of the books referred to.

It may be faid, that, as Clement hath not used words of quotation, it is not certain that he refers to any book whatever. The words of Chrift, which he has put down, he might himfelf have heard from the apostles, or might have received through the ordinary medium of oral tradition. This hath been faid; but that no fuch inference can be drawn from the absence of words of quotation is proved by the three following confiderations :--- First, that Clement, in the very fame manner, namely, without any mark of references, ules a passage now found in the epistle to the Romans\*; which passage, from the peculiarity of the words which compose it, and from their order, it is manifeft that he must have taken from the book. The fame remark may be repeated of fome

\* Rom. i. 29.

## [ 192 ]

very fingular fentiments in the epifile to the Hebrews. Secondly, that there are many fentences of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians standing in Clement's epistle without any fign of quotation, which yet certainly are quotations; becaufe it appears that Clement had St. Paul's epistle before him, inafmuch as in one place he mentions it in terms too express to leave us in any doubt-" Take into your hands the epiftle of the bleffed apostle Paul." Thirdly, that this method of adopting words of Scripture, without reference or acknowledgement, was, as will appear in the fequel, a method in general use amongst the most ancient Christian writers. These analogies not only repel the objection, but caft the prefumption on the other fide; and afford a confiderable degree of politive proof, that the words in queflion have been borrowed from the places of Scripture in which we now find them.

But take it if you will the other way, that Clement had heard these words from the apostles or first teachers of Christianity; with



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respect to the precise point of our argument, viz. that the scriptures contain what the apostles taught, this supposition may ferve almost as well.

III. Near the conclusion of the epifile to the Romans, St. Paul, amongst others, sends the following falutation : " Salute Afyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobus, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them."

Of Hermas, who appears in this catalogue of Roman Christians as contemporary with St. Paul, a book bearing the name, and it is most probable rightly, is still remaining. It is called the Shepherd or Paftor of Hermas\*. Its antiquity is incontestable, from the quotations of it in Irenzus, A. D. 178, Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 194, Tertullian, A. D. 200, Origen, A. D. 230. The notes of time extant in the epiftle itself agree with its tit'e, and with the teffimonies concerning it, for it purports to have been written during the lifetime of Clement.

\* Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 111.



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In this piece are tacit allusions to St. Matthew's, St. Luke's, and St. John's gospels ; that is to fay, there are applications of thoughts and expressions found in these gofpels, without citing the place or writer from which they were taken. In this form appear in Hermas the confessing and denying of Chrift\*; the parable of the feed fown †; the comparison of Christ's disciples to little children; the faying, "he that putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery 1;" the fingular expression, " having received all power from his father," in probable allufion to Mat. xxviii. 18. and Chrift being the "gate," or only way of coming " to God," in plain allusion to John . xiv. 6.—x. 7. 9. There is also a probable allusion to Acts v. 32.

This piece is the reprefentation of a vision, and has by many been accounted a weak and fanciful performance. I therefore obferve, that the character of the writing has

\* Mat. x. 32, 33. or Luke xii. 8, 9.
† Mat. xiii. 3. or Luke viii. 5.
‡ Luke xvi. 18.



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little to do with the purpole for which we adduce it. It is the age in which it was compoled that gives the value to its teftimony.

IV. Ignatius, as it is teffified by ancient Chriftian writers, became Bishop of Antioch about thirty-seven years after Christ's afcenfion; and therefore, from his time, and place, and flation, it is probable that he had known and conversed with many of the apostles. Epistles of Ignatius are referred to by Polycarp his contemporary. Passages found in the epifiles now extant under his name are quoted by Irenæus, A. D. 178, by Origen, A. D. 230; and the occasion of writing the epiftles is given at large by Eufebius and Jerome. What are called the finaller episitles of Ignatius are generally deemed to be those which were read by Irenæus, Origen, and Eufebius\*.

In these epistles are various undoubted allusions to the gospels of St. Matthew and St. John; yet so far of the same form with those in the preceding articles, that, like

\* Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 147.



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them, they are not accompanied with marks of quotation. Of these allusions the following are clear fpecimens:

"Chrift was baptifed of John, that all righteousness might be Mait\*. { fulfilled by him." "Be ye wise as serpents in all things, and harmless as a dove."

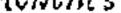
"Yet the spirit is not deceiv-ed, being from God; for it knows whence it comes, and whi-John †. < ther it goes." "He (Chrift) is the door of the Father, by which enter in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Apoftles, and the Church." As

\* iii. 15. " For thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteoufnefs."

xi. 16. "Be ye therefore wife as ferpents, and harmlefs as doves."

+ iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it lifteth, and thou hearest the found thereof, but canft not tell

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As to the manner of quotation this is obforvable:—Ignatius, in one place, fpeaks of St. Paul in terms of high refpect, and quotes his epifile to the Ephefians by *name*; yet in feveral other places he borrows words and fentiments from the fame epifile without mentioning it: which fhews, that this was his general manner of using and applying writings then extant, and then of high authority.

V. Polycarp \* had been taught by the apoftles; had converfed with many who had feen Chrift; was alfo by the apoftles appointed Bishop of Smyrna. This testimony concerning Polycarp is given by Irenæus, who in his youth had feen him. "I can tell the place," faith Irenæus, "in which the bleffed Polycarp fat and taught, and his going out and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his perion, and

whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; fo is every one that is born of the spirit."

x. 9. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be faved."

\* Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 192.



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the difcourfes he made to the people, and how he related his converfation with John and others who had feen the Lord, and how he related their fayings, and what he had heard concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrine, as he had received them from the eye-witneffes of the word of life : all which Polycarp related agreeable to the fcriptures."

Of Polycarp, whofe proximity to the age

and country and perfons of the apofiles is thus attefted, we have one undoubted epifile remaining. And this, though a fhort letter, contains nearly forty clear allufions to books of the New Teftament; which is ftrong evidence of the refpect which Chriftians of that age bore for thefe books.

Amongst these, although the writings of St. Paul are more frequently used by Polycarp than other parts of scripture, there are copious allusions to the gospel of St. Matthew, some to passages found in the gospels both of Matthew and Luke, and some which more nearly refemble the words in Luke.



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I felect the following, as fixing the authority of the Lord's prayer, and the use of it amongst the primitive Christians, "If therefore we pray the Lord that he will forgive us, we ought also to forgive."

"With fupplication befeeching the all-feeing God not to lead us into temptation."

And the following, for the fake of repeating an obfervation already made, that words of our Lord, found in our gofpels, were at this early day quoted as fpoken by him; and not only fo, but quoted with fo little queftion or confcioufnefs of doubt, about their being really his words, as not even to mention, much lefs to canvafs, the authority from which they were taken.

"But remembering what the Lord faid, teaching, Judge not, that ye be not judged; forgive, and ye fhall be forgiven; be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; with what measure ye mete, it fhall be measured to you again "."

\* Mat. vii. 1, 2. v. 7. Luke vi. 37, 38.



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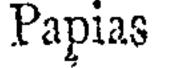
Supposing Polycarp to have had these words from the books in which we now find them, it is manifest that the books were confidered by him, and, as he thought, confidered by his readers, as authentic accounts of Christ's discourses; and that that point was incontestable.

The following is a decifive, though what we call a tacit, reference to St. Peter's speech in the Acts of the Apostles :--- " whom God

hath raifed, having loofed the pains of death\*."

VI. Papias +, a hearer of John, and companion of Polycarp, as Irenæus attefts, and of that age as all agree, in a paffage quoted by Eusebius, from a work now loft, exprefsly afcribes the refpective gofpels to Matthew and Mark; and in a manner which proves, that these gospels must have publicly borne the names of these authors at that time, and probably long before; for

\* Acts ii. 24. + Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 239.



#### [ 20I ]

Papias does not fay, that one gospel was written by Matthew, and another by Mark; but, affuming this as perfectly well known, he tells us from what materials Mark collected his account, viz. from Peter's preaching, and in what language Matthew wrote, viz. in Hebrew. Whether Papias was well informed in this flatement or not; to the point from which I produce this testimony, namely, that these books bore these names at this time, his authority is complete.

The writers hitherto alledged, had all lived and converfed with fome of the apoftles. The works of theirs which remain, are in general very short pieces, yet rendered extremely valuable by their antiquity; and none, fhort as they are, but what contain some important testimony to our historical icriptures \*.

#### VII. Not

\* That the quotations are more thinly ftrown in thefe, than in the writings of the next and of fucceeding ages, is, in a good measure, accounted for by the observation, that the scriptures of the New Testament



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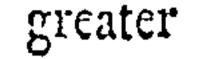
VII. Not long after these, that is, not. much more than twenty years after the last, follows Justin Martyr \*. His remaining works are much larger than any that have yet been noticed. Although the nature of his two principal writings, one of which was addressed to heathens, and the other was a conference with a Jew, did not lead him to such frequent appeals to Christian books, as would have appeared in a discourse intended for Christian readers; we neverthe-

lefs reckon up in them between twenty and thirty quotations of the Gofpels and Acts of the Apoftles, certain, diftinct, and copious: if each verfe be counted feparately, a much

had not yet, nor by their recency hardly could have, become a general part of Christian education; read, as the Old Testament was, by Jews and Christians from their childhood, and thereby intimately mixing, as that had long done, with all their religious ideas, and with their language upon religious fubjects. In process of time, and as foon perhaps as could be expected, this came to be the case. And then we perceive the effect, in a proportionably greater frequency, as well as copiousness of allusion  $\ddagger$ .

\* Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 258.

† Mich. Intr. c. ii. fect. vi.



greater number; if each expression, a very great one\*.

We meet with quotations of three of the golpels within the compals of half a page : "And in other words he fays, Depart from me into outer darknels, which the Father hath prepared for Satan and his angels," (which is from Matthew xxv. 41.) "And again he faid in other words, I give unto you power to tread upon ferpents and fcorpions, and venomous beafts, and upon all the power of the enemy." (This from Luke x. 19.) "And before he was crucified, he faid, The fon of man mult fuffer many things, and be rejected of the Scribes and Pharifees, and be crucified, and rife again the third day." (This from Mark viii. 31.)

In another place Justin quotes a passage in the history of Christ's birth, as delivered

"He cites our prefent canon, and particularly our four Gospels continually, I dare fay, above two hundred times." Jones's New and Full Method. Appen. vol. i. p. 589 ed. 1726. ``

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by Matthew and John, and fortifies his quotation by this remarkable teftimony; " as they have taught, who have writ the hiftory of all things concerning our Saviour Jefus Chrift; and we believe them."

Quotations also are found from the Gofpel of St. John.

What, moreover, feems extremely material to be obferved, is, that in all Juffin's works, from which might be extracted almost a complete life of Christ, there are but two inftances, in which he refers to any thing as faid or done by Chrift, which is not related concerning him in our prefent gofpels: which fnews, that these gospels, and thefe, we may fay, alone, were the authorities from which the Christians of that day drew the information upon which they depended. One of these instances is of a faying of Chrift not met with in any book now extant". The other of a circumftance in Chrift's

\* "Wherefore also our Lord Jefus Christ has faid,



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Christ's baptism, namely, a siery or luminous appearance upon the water, which, according to Epiphanius, is noticed in the Gofpel of the Hebrews: and which might be true; but which, whether true or falle, is mentioned by Justin, with a plain mark of diminution, when compared with what he quotes as refting upon fcripture authority. The reader will advert to this diffinction; "and then, when Jefus came to the river Jordan,

In whatfoever I shall find you, in the fame I will also judge you." Poffibly Juffin defigned not to quote any text, but to represent the scnse of many of our Lord's fayings. Fabricius has obferved, that this faying has been quoted by many writers, and that Justin is the only one who aferibes it to our Lord, and that perhaps by a flip of his memory.

Words refembling these are read repeatedly in Ezekiel, "I will judge them according to their ways." (vii. 3. xxxiii. 20.) It is remarkable that Juflin had but just before expressly quoted Ezekiel. Mr. Jones upon this circumftance founded a conjecture, that Juftin wrote only "the Lord hath faid," intending to quote the words of God, or rather the fenfe of those words, in Ezekiel; and that fome transcriber, imagining thefe to be the words of Chrift, infirited in his copy the addition "Jesus Chrift." Vol. 1. p. 539.

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where John was baptifing, as Jefus descended into the water, a fire allo was kindled in Jordan; and when he came up out of the water, the apostles of this our Christ have written, that the Holy Ghoft lighted upon him as a dove."

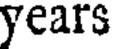
All the references in Justin are made without mentioning the author; which proves that these books were perfectly notorious, and that there were no other accounts of

Chrift then extant, or, at least, no others fo received and credited as to make it neceffary to diffinguish these from the rest.

But although Justin mentions not the author's names, he calls the books, "Memoirs composed by the Apostles," "Memoirs compofed by the Apostles and their Companions;" which descriptions, the latter especially, exactly fuit with the titles which the Golpels and Acts of the Apoltles now bear.

VIII. Hegefippus\* came about thirty

\* Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 314.



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years after Justin. His testimony is remarkable only for this particular; that he relates of himfelf, that, travelling from Palefline to Rome, he visited upon his journey many bishops; and that "in every fuccession, and in every city, the fame doctrine is taught, which the Law, and the Prophets, and the Lord teacheth." This is an important attestation, from good authority, and of high antiquity. It is generally underftood that by the word "Lord," Hegefippus intended fome writing or writings, containing the teaching of Christ, in which fense alone the term combines with the other terms "Law and Prophets," which denote writings; and together with them admits of the verb "preacheth," in the prefent tenfe. Then, that thefe writings were fome or all of the books of the New Teftament, is rendered probable from hence, that in the fragments of his works, which are preferved in Eufebius, and in a writer of the ninth century, enough, though it be little, is left to shew,. that Hegelippus expressed divers things in the style of the Gospels, and of the Acts of



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the Apostles; that he referred to the history in the fecond chapter of Matthew, and recited a text of that Gofpel as fpoken by our Lord.

IX. At this time, viz. about the year 170, the churches of Lyons and Vienne in France fent a relation of the fufferings of their martyrs to the churches of Afia and Phrygia \*. The epifile is preferved entire by Eufebius. And what carries in fome measure the teftimony of these churches to a higher age is, that they had now for their bilhop Pothinus, who was ninety years cld, and whofe early life confequently must have immediately joined on with the times of the apostles. In this epille are exact references to the Gospels of Luke and John, and to the Acts of the Apofiles. The form of reference the fame as in all the preceding articles. That from St. John is in these words: "Then was fulfilled that which was fpoken by the Lord, that whofoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God fervice +." 14 † Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 332. † John xvi. 2.



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X. The evidence now opens upon us full and clear. Irenæus \* fucceeded Pothinus as bishop of Lyons. In his youth he had been a difciple of Polycarp, who was a difciple of John. In the time in which he lived, he was diftant not much more than a century from the publication of the Gofpels : in his instruction, only by one step separated from the perfons of the Apostles. He afferts of himfelf and his contemporaries, that they were able to reckon up, in all the principal churches, the fuccession of bishops from the first +. I remark these particulars concerning Irenzeus with more formality than ufual; because the tellimony which this writer affords to the hiftorical books of the New Teflament, to their authority, and to the titles which they bear, is express, positive, and exclusive. One principal passage, in which this teflimony is contained, opens with a precife affertion of the point which we have laid down as the foundation of our argument, viz. that the ftory which the Gospels exhibit is the ftory which the Apofiles told. "We have \* Lard. vol. i. p. 344. + Adv. Hæref. l. iii. c. 3. VOL. I. P

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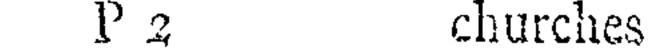
not received," faith Irenæus, " the knowledge of the way of our falvation by any others than those by whom the gospel has been brought to us. Which gospel they first preached, and afterwards, by the will of God, committed to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith.—For after that our Lord rofe from the dead, and they (the apoftles) were endowed from above with the power of the Holy Ghoft coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things. They then went forth to all the ends of the earth, declaring to men the bleffing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one alike, the gospel of God. Matthew then, among the Jews, writ a gofpel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gofpel at Rome, and founding a church there. And after their exit, Mark alfo, the difciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter. And Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the gospel preached by him (Paul). Afterwards John,

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John, the difciple of the Lord, who also lean. ed upon his breaft, he likewife published a gofpel while he dwelt at Ephefus in Afia." If any modern divine should write a book upon the genuinenels of the Gospels, he could not affert it more expressly, or flate their original more diffinctly, than Irenæus hath done within little more than a hundred years after they were published.

The correspondency, in the days of Ire-

næus, of the oral and written tradition, and the deduction of the oral tradition through. various channels from the age of the apofiles, which was then lately paffed, and, by confequence, the probability that the books truly delivered what the apofiles taught, is inferred alfo with firict regularity from another paffage of his works. "The tradition of the Apostles (this Father faith) hath spread itfelf over the whole universe; and all they, who fearch af er the fources of truth, will find this tradition to be held facred in every church. We might enumerate all those who have been appointed bifhops to thefe





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churches by the apoftles, and all their fuc-- ceffors, up to our days. It is by this uninterrupted fucceffion that we have received the tradition which actually exifts in the church, as also the doctrines of truth, as it was preached by the apoftles\*." The reader will observe upon this, that the fame Irenæus, who is now flating the flrength and uniformity of the tradition, we have before feen recognizing, in the fullest manner, the authority of the written records; from which we are entitled to conclude, that they were then conformable to each other.

I have faid, that the teffimony of Irenæus in favour of our gospels is exclusive of all others. I allude to a remarkable paffage in his works, in which, for fome reafons fufficiently fanciful, he endeavours to fhew, that there could be neither more nor fewer gospels than *four*. With his argument we have no concern. The polition itself proves that four, and only four, gofpels were at that

\* Ir. in Hær. l. iii. c. 3.



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time publicly read and acknowledged. That thefe were our gofpels, and in the ftate in which we now have them, is fhown from many other places of this writer belide that which we have already alledged. He mentions how Matthew begins his gofpel, how Mark begins and ends his, and their fuppofed reafons for fo doing. He enumerates at length the feveral paffages of Chrift's hiftory in Luke, which are not found in any of the other evangelifts. He ftates the particular

defign with which St. John composed his gospel, and accounts for the doctrinal declarations which precede the narrative.

To the book of the Acts of the Apoftles, its author and credit, the teftimony of Irenæus is no lefs explicit. Referring to the account of St. Paul's conversion and vocation, in the ninth chapter of that book, "Nor can they (fays he, meaning the parties with whom he argues) shew that he is not to be credited, who has related to us the truth with the greatest exactnes." In another place, he has actually collected the fe-P 3 veral

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veral texts, in which the writer of the hiftory is represented as accompanying St. Paul, which leads him to deliver a fummary of almost the whole of the last twelve chapters of the book.

In an author, thus abounding with references and allufions to the Scriptures, there is not one to any apocryphal Chriftian writing whatever. This is a broad line of diftinction between our facred books and the

pretensions of all others.

The force of the teflimony of the period which we have confidered, is greatly firengthened by the obfervation, that it is the teflimony, and the concurring teflimony, of writers who lived in countries remote from one another. Clement flourifhed at Rome, Ignatius at Andoch, Polycarp at Smyrna, Juftin Martyr in Syria, and Irenæus in France.

XI. Omitting Athenagoras and Theophiius, who lived about this time\*; in the re-\* Lard. vol. i. p. 400.-Ib. 422. maining

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maining works of the former of whom are clear references to Mark and Luke; and in the works of the latter, who was bishop of Antioch, the fixth in fucceffion from the apofiles, evident allufions to Matthew and John, and probable allufions to Luke (which, confidering the nature of the compositions, that they were addreffed to heathen readers, is as much as could be expected); obferving alfo, that the works of two learned Christian writers of the fame age, Miltiades and Pantænus\*, are now loft; of which Miltiades Eufebius records, that his writings " were monuments of zeal for the divine oracles;" and which Pantænus, as Jerome teflifies, was a man of prudence and learning, both in the divine feriptures and fecular literature, and had left many commentaries upon the holy fcriptures then extant: paffing by thefe without further remark, we come to one of the most voluminous of ancient Christian writers, Clement of Alexandria †. Clement followed Irenaus at the diftance of only fix-

\* Lard. vol. i. p. 418. 450. † Ib. vol. ii. p. 469.

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teen years, and therefore may be faid to maintain the feries of tellimony in an uninterrupted continuation.

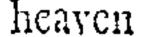
In certain of Clement's works, now loft, but of which various parts are recited by Elfebius, there is given a diffinct account of the order in which the four gospels were written. The gcspels, which contain the genealogies, were (he fays) written first, Mark's next, at the inftance of Peter's fol-Iowers, and John's the laft; and this account he tells us that he had received from Prefbyters of more ancient times. This tellimony proves the following points; that these gospels were the histories of Christ then publicly received, and relied upon; that the dates, occasions, and circumftances of their publication were at that time fubjects of attention and enquiry amongst Christians. In the works of Clement which remain, the four Gofpels are repeatedly quoted by the names of their authors, and the Acts of the Apostles is expressly aferibed to Luke. In one place, after mentioning a particular circumftance,

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cumstance, he adds thefe remarkable words: "We have not this paffage in the four gospels delivered to us, but in that according to the Egyptians;" which puts a marked diffinction between the four gospels and all other hillories, or pretended histories, of Christ. In another part of his works, the perfect confidence, with which he received the gospels, is fignified by him in these words: "That this is true appears from hence, that it is written in the Gospel according to St. Luke;" and again, "I need not use many words, but only to alledge the evangelic voice of the Lord." His quotations are numerous. The fayings of Chrift, of which he alledges many, are all taken from our gospels, the fingle exception to this observation appearing to be a loofe \* quotation of a paffage in St. Matthew's gofpel.

### XII. In

\* "Afk great things, and the fmall fhall be added unto you." Clement rather chofe to expound the words of Matthew (vi. 33.) than literally to cite them; and this is most undeniably proved by another place in the fame Clement, where he both produces the text and thefe words as an exposition :---" Seek ye first the kingdom of



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XII. In the age in which they lived #, Tertullian joins on with Clement. The number of the gospels then received, the names of the evangelist, and their proper defcriptions, are exhibited by this writer in one fhort fentence :--- "Among the *apofiles*, John and Matthew teach us the faith; among apostolical men, Luke and Mark refresh it." The next passage to be taken from Tertullian, affords as complete an atteflation to the authenticity of our books, as can be well imagined. After enumerating the churches which had been founded by Paul, at Corinth, in Galatia, at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Ephesus; the church of Rome eftablished by Peter and Paul; and other churches derived from John; he proceeds thus :-- " I fay then, that with them, but not with them only which are apoftolical, but with all who have fellowship with

heaven and its righteoufnefs, for thefe are the great things; but the fmall things, and things relating to this life, fhall be added unto you." Jones's New and Full Method, vol. i. p. 553.

\* Lardner, vol. ii. p. 561.

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them in the fame faith, is that gofpel of Luke received from its first publication, which we fo zealoufly maintain:" and prefently afterwards adds--" The fame authority of the apostolical churches will support the other gospels, which we have from them and according to them, I mean John's and Matthew's, although that likewife, which Mark published, may be said to be Peter's, whofe interpreter Mark was." In another place Tertullian affirms, that the three other gofpels were in the hands of the churches from the beginning, as well as Luke's. This noble testimony fixes the universality with which the gospels were received, and their antiquity; that they were in the hands of all, and had been fo from the first. And this evidence appears not more than one hundred and fifty years after the publication of the books. The reader must be given to understand that, when Tertullian speaks of maintaining or defending (tuendi) the Gospel of St. Luke, he only means maintaining or defending the integrity of the copies of Luke received by Christian ehurches, in oppolition

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position to certain curtailed copies used by Marcion, against whom he writes.

This author frequently cites the Acts of the Apostles under that title, once calls it Luke's commentary, and observes how St. Paul's epistles confirm it.

After this general evidence, it is unneceffary to add particular quotations. Thefe, however, are fo numerous and ample, as to have led Dr. Lardner to obferve, "that there are more, and larger, quotations of the fmall volume of the New Teflament in this one Chriftian author, than there are of all the works of Ciccro in writers of all characters for feveral ages \*."

Tertullian quotes no Chriftian writing as of equal authority with the Scriptures, and no fpurious book at all; a broad line of diftinction, we may once more obferve, between our facred books and all others.

\* Lard. vol. ii. p. 647.

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We may again likewife remark the wide extent through which the reputation of the Gofpels, and of the Acts of the Apofiles, had fpread, and the perfect confent in this point of diftant and independent focieties. It is now only about one hundred and fifty years fince Chrift was crucified; and within this period, to fay nothing of the apoftolical Fathers who have been noticed already, we have Juftin Martyr at Neapolis, Theophilus at Antioch, Irenæus in France, Clement at Alexandria, Tertullian at Carthage, quoting the fame books of hiftorical Scriptures, and, I may fay, quoting thefe alone.

XIII. An interval of only thirty years, and that occupied by no finall number of Chriftian writers\*, whofe works only remain in fragments and quotations, and in every one of which is fome reference or other to the gofpels (and in one of them—Hippolytus, as preferved in Theodoret—is an abftract

\* Minucius Felix, Apollonius, Caius, Aderius, Urbanus, Alexander bifhop of Jerufalem, Hippolytus, Ammonius, Julius Africanus.

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of the whole gospel history), brings us to a name of great celebrity in Christian antiquity, Origen\* of Alexandria, who, in the quantity of his writings, exceeded the most laborious of the Greek and Latin authors. Nothing can be more peremptory upon the fubject now under confideration, and, from a writer of his learning and information, more fatilfactory, than the declaration of Origen, preferved, in an extract from his works, by Eufebius: "That the four gospels alone are received without dispute by the whole church of God under heaven:" to which declaration is immediately fubjoined a brief hiftory of the respective authors, to whom they were then, as they are now, afcribed. The language holden concerning the gofpels throughout the works of Origen which remain, entirely correspond with the testimony here cited. His attestation to the Acts of the Apostles is no less positive: "And Luke alfo once more founds the trumpet relating the acts of the Apoftles." The

\* Lard. vol. iii. p. 234.

univerfality



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univerfality with which the fcriptures were then read, is well fignified by this writer, in a paffage in which he has occasion to obferve against Celfus, " That it is not in any private books, or fuch as are read by a few only, and those studious perfons, but in books read by every body, that it is written, the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly feen, being underflood by things that are made." It is to no purpose to single out quotations of scripture from fuch a writer as this. We might as well make a felection of the quotations of fcripture in Dr. Clarke's fermons. They are fo thickly fown in the works of Origen. that Dr. Mill fays, " If we had all his works remaining, we fhould have before us almost the whole text of the Bible"."

Origen notices, in order to censure, certain apocryphal gospels. He also uses four writings of this fort; that is, throughout his large works he once or twice, at the most, quotes

\* Mill. Proleg. cap. vi. p. 66.

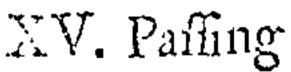
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each of the four; but always with fome mark, either of direct reprobation, or of caution to his readers, manifeltly effecting them of little or no authority.

XIV. Gregory, bishop of Neocefarea, and Dionyfius of Alexandria, were fcholars of Origen. Their testimony, therefore, though full and particular, may be reckoned a repetition only of his. The feries however, of evidence, is continued by Cyprian bishop of Carthage, who flourished within twenty years after Origen. " The church (fays this Father) is watered like Paradife, by four rivers, that is, by four gospels." The Acts of the Apoftles is also frequently quoted by Cyprian under that name, and under the name of the "Divine Scriptures." In his various writings are fuch conftant and copious citations of scripture, as to place this part of the testimony beyond controverly. Nor is there, in the works of this eminent African bishop, one quotation of a spurious or apocryphal Christian writing.





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XV. Paffing over a crowd # of writers following Cyprian, at different diffances, but all within forty years of his time; and who all, in the imperfect remains of their works, either cite the hiftorical foriptures of the New Testament, or speak of them in terms of profound respect; I single out Victorin, bishop of Pettaw in Germany, merely on account of the remotencies of his fituation from that of Origen and Cyprian, who were Africans: by which circumstance, his testimony taken in conjunction with theirs, proves that the fcripture hiftories, and the fame hiftories, were known and received from one fide of the Chriftian world to the other. This bifhop f lived about the year 290; and in a commentary upon this text of the Revela-- tions, " The first was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third like a man, and the feurth like a flying eagle," he makes out

\* Novatus, Rome, A. D. 251. Dionyfius, Rome, A. D. 259. Commedian, A. D. 270. Anatolius, Laodicea, A. D. 270. Theognoflus, A. D. 282. Methodius, Lycia, A. D. 290. Phileas, Egypt, A. D. 296. †Lard. vcl. v. p. 214.



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that by the four creatures are intended the four Gofpels; and, to fhew the propriety of the fymbols, he recites the fubject with which cach evangelist opens his history. The explication is fanciful, but the teftimony politive. Healfo expressly cites the Acts of the Apostles.

XVI. Arnobius and Lactantius\*, about the year 300, composed formal arguments upon the credibility of the Chriftian religion. As these arguments were addressed to Gen-

tiles, the authors abstain from quoting Chriftian books by name, one of them giving this very reason for his referve : but when they come to state, for the information of their readers, the outlines of Chrift's hiflory, it is apparent that they draw their accounts from our Gospels, and from no other sources; for these flatements exhibit a fummary of almost every thing which is related of Chrift's actions and miracles by the four evangelifts. Arnobius vindicates, without mentioning their names, the credit of these historians,

<sup>\*</sup> Ib. vol. vi<sup>\*</sup>. p. 43. 201.

observing,

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observing, that they were eye-witneffes of the facts which they relate, and that their ignorance of the arts of composition was rather a confirmation of their testimony, than an objection to it. Lactantius alfo argues in defence of the religion, from the confiftency, fimplicity, difinterestedness, and fufferings of the Christian historians, meaning by that term our evangelifts.

XVII. We close the feries of testimonics

with that of Eufebius", bishop of Cæfarea, who flourished in the year 315, contemporary with, or posterior only by fifteen years to, the two authors last cited. This voluminous writer, and most diligent collector of the writings of others, befide a variety of large works, composed a history of the affairs of Christianity from its origin to his own time. His teffimony to the feriptures is the teftimony of a man much conversant in the works of Chriftian authors written during the three first centuries of its ara; and

\* Ib. vol. viii. p. 33.



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who had read many which are now loft. In a passage of his evangelical demonstration, Eulebius remarks, with great nicety, the delicacy of two of the evangelifts, in their manner of noticing any circumstance which regarded themfelves, and of Mark, as writing under Peter's direction, in the circumftances which regarded him. The illustration of this remark leads him to bring together long quotations from each of the evangelifts; and the whole passage is a proof, that Eusebius, and the Christians of those days, not only read the gospels, but studied them with attention and exactnels. In a paffage of his ecclesiastical history, he treats, in form, and at large, of the occasions of writing the four gospels, and of the order in which they were written. The title of the chapter is, " Of the Order of the Gofpels;" and it begins thus: "Let us observe the writings of this apostle John, which are not contradicted by any; and, first of all, must be mentioned, as acknowledged by all, the gofpel according to him, well known to all the churches under heaven; and that it has been

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jully placed by the ancients the fourth in order, and after the other three, may be made evident in this manner." Eusebius then proceeds to fliew that John wrote the laft of the four, and that his gofpel was intended to fupply the omifions of the others; especially in the part of our Lord's ministry, which took place before the imprisonment of John the Baptift. He observes, " that the apofiles of Chrift were not fludious of the ornaments of composition, nor indeed forward to write at all, being wholly occupied with their ministry."

This learned author makes no use at all of Christian writings, forged with the names of Christ's aposles, or their companions.

We close this branch of our evidence here; because, after Eusebius, there is no room for any question upon the fubject; the works of Christian writers being as full of texts of feripture, and of references to feripture, as the discourses of modern divines. Future teflimonies to the books of fcripture could only prove that they never loft their character or authority.





#### A

## VIEW

OF THE

#### EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN THREE PARTS.

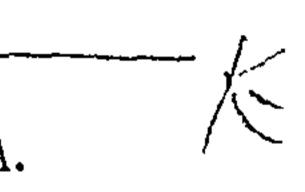
PART I. Of the direct Hiftorical Evidence of Christianity, and wherein it is diffinguished from the Evidence alledged

for other Miracles.

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PART II. Of the Auxiliary Evidences of Christianity.

PART III. A brief Confideration of fome popular Objections.



BY WILLIAM PALEY, M. A. ARCHDEACON OF CARLISLE.

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M.DCCC.

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#### SECT. II.

When the scriptures are quoted, or alluded to; they are quoted with peculiar respect, as books fui generis; as pollelling an authority which belonged to no other books, and as conclusive in all questions and controversies amongsi Christians.

DESIDE the general strain of reference and quotation, which uniformly and firongly indicates this diffinction, the following may be regarded as specific testimonies.

I. Theophilus\*, bishop of Anticch, the fixth in fucceffion from the apostles, and who flourished little more than a century after the books of the New Teftament were written, having occafion to quote one of our golpels, writes thus: " Thefe things the holy feriptures teach us, and all who were moved by the holy spirit, among whom John

\* Lard. Cred. part ii. vol. i. p. 429.



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fays, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." Again: "Concerning the righteoufnels which the law teaches, the like things are to be found in the prophets and the *gofpels*, becaufe that all being infpired, fpoke by one and the fame Spirit of God \*." No words can teftify more ftrongly than thefe do, the high and peculiar refpect in which thefe books were holden.

II. A writer againft Artemon †, who may be fuppoled to come about one hundred and fifty-eight years after the publication of the fcriptures, in a paffage quoted by Eufebius, ufes thefe expressions : "Poffibly what they (our adversaries) fay, might have been credited, *if first of all* the divine fcriptures did not contradict them; *and then* the writings of of certain brethren more ancient than the times of Victor." The brethren mentioned by name, are Justin, Miltiades, Tatian, Clement, Irenzus, Melito, with a general ap-

<sup>\*</sup> Ib. vol. i. p. 448. + Ib. vol. iii. p. 40.



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peal to many more not named. This paffage proves, first, that there was at that time a collection called *divine fcriptures*; fecondly, that these fcriptures were esteemed of higher authority than the writings of the most early and celebrated Christians.

III. In a piece ascribed to Hippolytus \*, who liv d near the fame time, the author professes, in giving his correspondent influction in the things about which he en-

quires, " to draw out of the *facred fountain*, and to fet before him from the facred feriptures, what may afford him fatisfaction." He then quotes immediately Puul's epifiles to Timothy, and afterwards many books of the New Teftament. This preface to the quotations carries in it a marked diffinction between the feriptures and other books.

IV. " Our affertions and discourses," saith Origen  $\dagger$ , " are unworthy of credit; we must receive the *for iptures* as witness."

· Ib. vol. iii. p. 112. + Ib. p. 287, 288, 289.

# 233

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After treating of the duty of prayer, he proceeds with his argument thus : " What we have faid may be proved from the divine fcriptures." In his books against Celfus, we find this paffage : " That our religion teaches us to seelt after wisdom, shall be shewn, both out of the ancient Jewish feriptures, which we also use, and out of those written fince Jefus, which are believed in the churches to be divine." These expressions afford abundant evidence of the peculiar and exclusive authority which the feriptures possessed.

V. Cyprian, bifhop of Carthage \*, whofe age lies close to that of Origen, earneftly exhorts Christian teachers, in all doubtful cases, "to go back to the fountain; and if the truth has in any cafe been thaken, to recur to the gospels and apostolic writings."-" The precepts of the gospel," fays he in another place, " are nothing less than authoritative divine lessons, the foundations of our hope, the supports of our faith, the guides of

. \* Ib. vol. iv. p. 840.



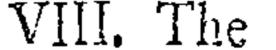
our way, the safe-guards of our course to heaven."

VI. Novatus ", a Roman, contemporary with Cyprian, appeals to the fcriptures, as the authority by which all errors were to be repelled, and difputes decided. " That Chrift is not only man, but God alfo, is proved by the facred authority of the divine writings."—" The divine fcripture eafily detects and confutes the frauds of heretics."—

" It is not by the fault of the heavenly feriptures, which never deceive." Stronger affertions than thefe could not be used.

VII. At the diftance of twenty years from the writer laft cited, Anatolius †, a learned Alexandrian, and bifhop of Laodicea, fpeaking of the rule for keeping Eafter, a queftion at that day agitated with much earnefinefs, fays of thofe whom he oppofed, "They can by no means prove their point by the authority of the divine feripture."

\* Ib. vol. v. p. 102. † Ib. vol. v. p. 146.



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VIII. The Arians, who fprung up about fifty years after this, argued flrenuoufly againft the ufe of the words confubftantial and effence, and like phrafes; "becaufe they were not in feripture \*." And in the fame ftrain, one of their advocates opens a conference with Auguftine, after the following manner: "If you fay what is reafonable, I muft fubmit. If you alledge any thing from the divine feriptures, which are common to both, I muft hear. But unteriptural expreffions (quæ extra feripturam tunt) deferve no regard."

Athanafius, the great antagonist of Arianism, after having enumerated the books of the Old and New Teslament, adds, "These are the fourtains of falvation, that he who thirsts may be fatisfied with the oracles contained in them. In these alone the doctrine of falvation is proclaimed. Let no man add to them, or take any thing from them +.

\* Ib. vol. vii. p. 283, 284. + Ib. vol. xii. p. 182. IX. Cyril,

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IX. Cyril, bifhop of Jerufalem\*, who wrote about twenty years after the appearance of Arianifm, ufes thefe remarkable words: "Concerning the divine and holy myfteries of faith, not the leaft article ought to be delivered without the leaft article ought tures." We are affured that Cyril's feriptures were the fame as ours, for he has left us a entalogue of the books included under that name.

X. Epiphanius †, twenty years after Cyril, challenges the Arians, and the followers of Origen, " to produce any passage of the Old or New Testament, favouring their fentiments."

XI. Poebadius, a Gallic bifhop, who lived about thirty years after the council of Nice, teflifies, that " the bifhops of that council first confulted the faceed volumes, and then declared their faith ‡."

\* Ib. vol. viii. p. 276. + Ib. p. 314.
 ‡ Ib. vol. ix. p. 52.
 XII. Bafil.

# T 237

XII. Bafil, bishop of Cefarea, in Capp2decia, contemporary with Epiphanius, fays, " that hearers instructed in the fcriptures ought to examine what is faid by their teachers, and to embrace what is agreeable to the feriptures, and to reject what is otherwife \*."

ZIII. Ephraim, the Syrian, a celebrated writer of the fame times, bears this conclufive tellimony to the propertion which forms the subject of our present chapter: "The truth written in the facred volume of the gospel, is a perfc& rule. Nothing can be taken from it, nor added to it, without great guilt 4."

XIV. Il we add Jerome to these, it is only for the evidence which he affords of the judgment of preceding ages. Jerome observes, concerning the quotations of ancient Christian writers, that is, of writers who were ancient in the year 400, that they

> \* Ib. vol. ix. p. 124. † Ib. p. 202.



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made a distinction between books; some they quoted as of authority, and others not: which observation relates to the books of fcripture, compared with other writings, apocryphal or heathen \*. Ň

\* Ib. vol. x. p. 123, 124.



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#### SECT.

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#### SECT. III.

The foriptures were in very early times collected into a diffinct volume.

IGNATIUS, who was bishop of Antioch within forty years after the afcenfion, and who had lived and converfed with the apoftles, fpeaks of the gospel and of the apoftles, in terms which render it very probable. that he meant by the golpel, the book or volume of the Golpels, and by the apoftles, the book or volume of their Epifiles. His words in one place are \*, "fleeing to the Gospel as the fiesh of Jesus, and to the Apofiles as the prefbytery of the Church ;" that is, as Le Clerc interprets them, " in order to understall the will of God, he fled to the gospels, which he believed no less than if Chrift in the flefh had been fpeaking to him; and to the writings of the

> \* Lard. Cred. part ii. vol. i. p. 180. apostles,

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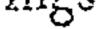
apofiles, whom he effected as the profbytery of the whole Christian church." It must be observed, that about eighty years after this we have direct proof, in the writings of Clement of Alexandria \*, that these two names, "Gofpel" and "Apofiles," were the names by which the writings of the New Teflament, and the division of these writings, were usually expressed.

Another paffage from Ignatius is the fol-

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lowing :- " But the Gofpel has fomewhat in it more excellent, the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, his passion and refurrection +."

And a third, "Ye ought to hearken to the Prophets, but effectially to the Gofpel, in which the paffion has been manifefted to us, and the refurrection perfected." In this last paffage the prophets and the gofpel arc put in conjunction; and as Ignatius undoubtedly meant by the Prophets a collection of writ-



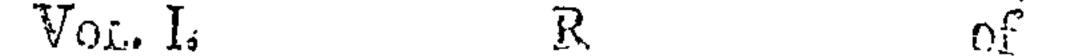
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ings, it is probable that he meant the fame by the Gofpel, the two terms fanding in evident parallelifm with each other.

This interpretation of the word "gofpel" in the pallages above quoted from Ignatius, is confirmed by a piece of nearly equal antiquiry, the relation of the martyrdom of Polycarp by the church of Smyrna. " All things," fay they, " that went before were done, that the Lord might flew us a martyrdom according to the gofpel, for he espected to be delivered up as the Lord alfo did "." And in another place, "We do not commend those who offer themselves, forasmuch as the gospel teaches us no such thing †." In both these places, what is called the gospel feems to be the hiftory of Jefus Chrift, and of his doctrine.

If this be the true fenfe of the paffages; they are not only evidences of our proposition, but flrong and very ancient proofs

\* Ig. Ep. c. i. + Ib. c. iv.



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of the high efteem in which the books of the New Testament were holden.

II. Eusebius relates, that Quadratus and fome others, who were the immediate fucceffors of the apoftles, travelling abroad to preach Chrift, carried the gospels with them, and delivered them to their converts. The words of Eulebius are: "Then travelling abroad, they performed the work of evangelist, being ambitious to preach Christ, and deliver the scripture of the divine gospels\*." Eulebius had before him the writings both of Quadratus himfelf, and of many others of that age, which are now loft. It is reafonable, therefore, to believe, that he had good grounds for his affertion. What is thus recorded of the gospels took place within fixty, or at the most feventy, years after they were published : and it is evident, that they must, before this time (and, it is probable, long before this time), have been in general use, and in high efteem in the

\* Lard. Cred. pt. ii. vol. i. p. 236.

churches:

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churches planted by the apoftles, inafmuch as they were now, we find, collected into a volume; and the immediate fucceffors of the apoftles, they who preached the religion of Chrift to those who had not already heard it, carried the volume with them, and delivered it to their converts.

III. Irenæus, in the year 178\*, puts the evangelic and apostolic writings in connection with the law and the prophets,

manifeftly intending by the one a code or collection of Christian facred writings, as the other expressed the code or collection of Jewish facred writings. And,

IV. Melito, at this time bishop of Sardis, writing to one Onefimus, tells his correfpondent †, that he had procured an accurate account of the books of the OLD Teftament. The occurrence, in this passage, of the term *Old* Teftament, has been brought to prove, and it certainly does prove, that there was

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then a volume or collection of writings called the New Teflament.

V. In the time of Clement of Alexandria, about fifteen years after the laft quoted teftimony, it is apparent that the Christian fcriptures were divided into two parts, under the general titles of the Gofpels and Apoftles; and that both these were regarded as of the highest authority. One, out of many expreffions of Clement alluding to this diftribution, is the following :- " There is a confent and harmony between the law and the prophets, the apostles and the gospel #."

VI. The fame division, "Prophets, Gofpels, and Apostles," appears in Tertullian †, the contemporary of Clement. The collection of the gospels is likewife called by this writer the "Evangelic Inftrument 1;" the whole volume, the "New Teftament;" and the two parts, the "Gospels and Apofiles §."

> \* Ib. vol. ii. p. 515. + Ib. p. 631. § Ib. p. 632. ‡ Ib. p. 57.1. VII. From

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VII. From many writers also of the third century, and especially from Cyprian, who lived in the middle of it, it is collected, that the Christian foriptures were divided into two codes or volumes, one called the "Gospels or Scriptures of the Lord," the other, the "Apostles, or Episles of the Apostles<sup>\*</sup>."

VIII. Eufebius, as we have already feen, takes fome pains to fhew, that the gofpel of St. John had been juftly placed by the Ancients " the fourth in order, and after the other three  $\pm$ ." Thefe are the terms of his proposition; and the very introduction of fuch an argument proves incontestably, that the four gofpels had been collected into a volume, to the exclusion of every other; that their order in the volume had been adjusted with much confideration; and that this had been done by those who were called Ancients in the time of Eufebius.

In the Diocletian perfecution in the year

\* Ib. vol. iv. p. 846. † Ib. vol. viii. p. 90.



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303, the fcriptures were fought out and burnt\*; many fuffered death rather than deliver them up; and those who betrayed them to the perfecutors were accounted as lapfed and apostate. On the other hand, Conftantine, after his conversion, gave directions for multiplying copies of the divine oracles, and for magnificently adorning them at the expence of the imperial treasury 7. What the Christians of that age fo richly embellished in their prosperity, and, which is more, fo tenacioully preferved under perfecution, was the very volume of the New Teftament which we now read,

\* Ib. vol. vii. p. 214 et seq. + Ib. p. 432.



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#### $\cdot$ SECT. IV.

Our prefent facred writings were foon distinguished by appropriate names and titles of respect.

I. POLYCARP: "I truft that ye are well exercifed in the *holy fcriptures*—as in thefe fcriptures it is faid, Be ye angry and fin not, and let not the fun go down upon your wrath \*." This paffage is extremely important; becaufe it proves that, in the time of Polycarp, who had lived with the apofiles, there were Chriftian writings diffinguifhed by the name of "holy fcriptures" or *facred* writings. Moreover the text quoted by Polycarp is a text found in the collection at this day. What alfo the fame Polycarp hath elfewhere quoted in the fame manner, may be confidered as proved to belong to the collection; and this comprehends St.

\* Lard. Cręd. vol, i. p. 203,

R 4 Matthew's

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Matthew's, and, probably, St. Luke's gofpel, the Acts of the Apoflles, ten epiftles of Paul, the first epiftle of Peter, and the first of John \*. In another place Polycarp has these words: "Whoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lufts, and fays there is neither refurrection nor judgment, he is the first-born of Satan †."—It does not appear what elfe Polycarp could mean by the "oracles of the Lord," but those fame " holy scriptures," or facred writings, of which he had fpoken before.

II. Juftin Martyr, whole apology was written about thirty years after Polycarp's epiftle, expressly cites fome of our present hiftories under the title of GOSPEL, and that not as a name by him first afcribed to them, but as the name by which they were generally known in his time. His words are these :—" For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called gospels, have thus delivered it, that Jesus commanded them to take bread, and give thanks ‡."

\*Ib. vol. i. p. 223. †Ib. p. 222. †Ib. p. 271. There

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There exifts no doubt, but that, by the memoirs above mentioned. Justin meant our prefent historical scriptures, for, throughout his works, he quoses these, and no others.

III. Dionyfius, bifhop of Corinth, who came thirty years after Juftin, in a paffage preferved in Eufobius (for his works are loft), fpeaks " of the foriptures of the Lord \*."

IV. And at the fame time, or very nearly fo, by Irenæus, bithop of Lyons in France †, they are called "divine foriptures,"—"divine oracles,"—" foriptures of the Lord,"— " eva gelic and apoftolic writing ‡." The quotations of Irenæus prove decidedly, that our prefent Gofpels, and thefe alone, together with the Acts of the Apoftles, were the hitlerical books comprehended by him under these appollations.

\* Ib. vol. i. p. 298.

† The reader will observe the remoteness of these two writers in country and fituation.

‡ Ib. p. 343 et seq.

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V. St. Matthew's gofpel is quoted by Theophilus, bifhop of Antioch, contemporary with Irenæus, under the title of the "evangelic voice \*;" and the copious works of Clement of Alexandria, publifhed within fifteen years of the fame time, afcribe to the books of the New Teftament the various titles of "facred books,"—" divine fcriptures,"—" divinely infpired fcriptures,"— "fcriptures of the Lord,"—" the true evangelical canon †."

VI. Tertullian, who joins on with Clement, befide adopting most of the names and epithets above noticed, calls the gospels " our Digesta," in allusion, as it should feem, to some collection of Roman laws ‡ then extant,

VII. By Origen, who came thirty years after Tertullian, the fame, and others no lefs ftrong titles, are applied to the Chriftian fcriptures; and, in addition thereunto, this

\* Ib. vol. i. p. 427. † Ib. vol. ii. p. 515. ‡ Ib. p. 630. writer

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writer frequently speaks of the "Old and New Testament,"—" the ancient and new foriptures,"—" the ancient and new oracles\*."

VIII. In Cyprian, who was not twenty years later, they are "books of the fpirit," —" divine fountains,"—" fountains of the divine fulnefs †."

The expressions we have thus quoted are

evidences of high and peculiar refpect. They all occur within two centuries from the publication of the books. Some of them commence with the companions of the apoftles; and they increase in number and variety, through a feries of writers, touching upon one another, and deduced from the first age of the religion,

<sup>\*</sup> In. vol. iii. p. 280. † Ib. vol. iv. p. 844.

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#### SECT. V.

Our scriptures were publicly read and expounded in the religious affemblies of the early Christians.

JUSTIN MARTYR, who wrote in the year 140, which was feventy or eighty years after fome, and lefs, probably, after others of the gofpels were publifhed, giving, in his first apology, an account, to the Emperor, of the Christian worship, has this remarkable paffage:

"The memoirs of the apofiles, or the writings of the prophets, are *read* according as the time allows; and, when the reader has ended, the prefident makes a difcourfe, exhorting to the imitation of fo excellent things \*."

"Lard. Cred. vol. i. p. 273.

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A few flort observations will shew the value of this testimony.

1. The "memoirs of the apoftles," Juffin in another place expressly tells us, are what are called "gospels;" and that they were the gospels, which we now use, is made certain by Justin's numerous quotations of *them*, and his filence about any others.

2. Juftin describes the general usage of the

#### Chriftian church.

3. Justin does not speak of it as recent or newly instituted, but in the terms in which men speak of established customs.

II. Tertullian, who followed Justin at the diffance of about fifty years, in his account of the religious affemblies of Christians as they were conducted in his time, fays, "We come together to recollect the divine foriptures; we nourifh our faith, raife our hope, confirm our truft, by the facred word \*."

\* Ib. vol. ii. p. 628. 7 III. Eusebius

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II. Eusebius records of Origen, and tites for his authority the letters of bishops contemporary with Origen, that, when he went into Palestine about the year 216, which was only 16 years after the date of Tertullian's teftimony, he was defired by the bishops of that country to discourse and expound the feriptures publicly in the church, though he was not yet ordained a prefbyter\*. This anecdote recognizes the usage, not only of reading, but of expounding, the fcriptures; and both as fublifying in full force. Origen also himself bears witness to the same practice : " This (fays he) we do, when the fcriptures are read in the church, and when the discourse for explication is delivered to the people 7." And, what is a still more ample testimony, many homilies of his upon the scriptures of the New Testament, delivered by him in the affemblies of the church, are still extant.

IV. Cyprian, whose age was not twenty

\* Ib. vol. iii. p. 68. 4 Ib. p. 302.

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years lower than that of Origen, gives his people an account of having ordained two perfons, who were before confeffors, to be readers; and what they were to read, appears by the reafon which he gives for his choice:—" Nothing (fays Cyprian) can be more fit, than that he, who has made a glorious confeffion of the Lord, fhould read publicly in the church; that he who has fhewn himfelf willing to die a martyr, fhould read the *gofpel of Chrift*, by which martyrs are made<sup>\*</sup>."

V. Intimations of the fame cuftom may be traced in a great number of writers in the beginning and throughout the whole of the fourth century. Of thefe teffimonies I will only ufe one, as being, of itfelf, express and full. Augustine, who appeared near the conclusion of the century, displays the benefit of the Christian religion on this very account, the public reading of the foriptures in the churches, "where (fays he) is a con-

\* Ib. vol. iv. p. 842.

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fluence of all forts of people of both fexes; and where they hear how they ought to live well in this world, that they may deferve to live happily and eternally in another." And this cuftom he declares to be univerfal: " The canonical books of feripture being read every where, the miracles therein recorded are well known to all people\*."

It does not appear that any books, other. than our prefent foriptures, were thus publicly read, except that the epifile of Clement was read in the church of Corinth, to which it had been addreffed, and in fome others; and that the Shepherd of Hermas was read in many churches. Nor does it fubtract much from the value of the argument, that ' these two writings partly come within it, becaufe we allow them to be the genuine writings of apofiolical men. There is not the least evidence, that any other gospel, than the four which we receive, was ever admitted to this diffinction.

Ib. vol. x. p. 276 et seq.

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#### SECT. VI.

Commentaries were anciently written upon the scriptures; harmonies formed out of them; different copies carefully collated; and verfions made of them into different languages.



INO greater proof can be given of the efteem in which thefe books were holden ` by the ancient Christians, or of the sense then entertained of their value and importance, than the industry bestowed upon them. And it ought to be observed, that the value and importance of these books confisted entirely in their genuineness and truth. There was nothing in them as works of tafte, or as compositions, which could have induced any one to have written a note upon them. Moreover it flews that they were even then confidered as ancient books. Men do not write comments upon publications of their VOL. L S OWD

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own times: therefore the tellimonies cited under this head afford an evidence which carries up the evangelic writings much beyond the age of the teltimonies themfelves, and to that of their reputed authors.

I. Tatian, a follower of Juftin Martyr, and who flourished about the year 170, composed a harmony, or collation, of the gospels, which he called *Diateffaron*, Of the four \*. The title, as well as the work, is remarkable; because it shews that then, as now, there were four, and only four, gospels in general use with Christians. And this was little more than a hundred years after the publication of some of them.

II. Pantænus, of the Alexandrian fchool, a man of great reputation and learning, who came twenty years after Tatian, wrote many commentaries upon the holy feriptures, which, as Jerome testifies, were extant in his time +.

\* Lard. vol. i. p. 307. † Ib. vol. i. p. 455. III. Clement

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III. Clement of Alexandria wrote fhort explications of many books of the Old and New Teftament\*

IV. Tertullian appeals from the authority of a later version, then in use, to the authentic Greek 4.

V. An anonymous author quoted by Eufebius, and who appears to have written about the year 212, appeals to the *ancient copies* of the feriptures, in refutation of fome corrupt readings alledged by the followers of Artemon ‡.

VI. The fame Eufebius, mentioning by name feveral writers of the church who lived at this time, and concerning whom he fays, "There full remain divers monuments of the laudable indufier of those ancient and eccletiattical men," (*i. e.* of Christian writers who were confidered as ancient in the year 300) adds, "There are besides treatifes of

> \* Ib. vol. ii. p. 462. † Ib. p. 633. ‡ Ib. vol. iii. p. 46.



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many others, whole names we have not been able to learn, orthodox and ecclefialtical men, as the interpretations of the divine fcriptures given by each of them flew \*."

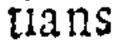
VII. The five last testimonies may be referred to the year 200; immediately after which, a period of thirty years gives us

Julius Africanus, who wrote an epifile upon the apparent difference in the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, which he endeavours to reconcile by the diffinction of natural and legal defeent, and conducts his hypothefis with great industry through the whole ferics of generations  $\dagger$ .

Ammonius, a learned Alexandrian, who composed, as Tatian had done, a harmony of *the four gospels*; which proves, as Tatian's work did, that there were four gospels, and no more, at this time in use in the church. It affords also an instance of the zeal of Chris-

\* Ib. vol. ii. p. 551. + Ib. vol. iii. p. 170.

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tians for those writings, and of their solicitude about them \*.

And, above both thefe, Origen, who wrote commentaries, or homilies, upon moft of the books included in the New Teftament, and upon no other books but thefe. In particular, he wrote upon St. John's gofpel, very largely upon St. Matthew's, and commentaries, or homilies, upon the Acts of the apoftles  $\dagger$ .

VIII. In addition to these, the third century likewise contains

Dionyfius of Alexandria, a very learned man, who compared, with great accuracy, the accounts in the four golpels of the time of Chrift's refurrection, adding a reflection which fhewed his opinion of their authority : "Let us not think that the evangelifts difagree, or contradict each other, although there be fome fmall difference; but let us

\* Ib. vol. iii. p. 122. + Ib. p. 352. 192. 202. 245. S 3 honeftly

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honeftly and faithfully endeavour to reconcile what we read "."

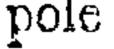
Victorin, bishop of Pettaw in Germany, who wrote comments upon St. Matthew's gospel f.

Lucian, a prefbyter of Antioch ; and Hefychius, an Egyptian bifhop, who put forth editions of the New Teftament.

IX. The fourth century fupplies a catalogue ‡ of fourteen writers, who expended their labours upon the books of the New Teffament, and whofe works or names are come down to our times; amongft which num!er it may be fufficient, for the pur-

\* Ib. vol. iv. p. 661. + Ib. p. 195.

‡ Eusebius, A. D	315	Gregory, Nyflen,	37 <b>I</b>
Juvencus, Spain,	330	Didymus of Alex.	370
Theodore, Thrace,	334	Ambrofe of Milan,	374
Hilary, Poictiers,	354	Diodore of Tarfus,	378
Fortunatus, -	340	Gaudent. of Brefcia,	387
Apollinarius of Lao-		Theodore of Cilicia,	394
dicea, -	362	Jerome, -	392
Damafus, Rome,	366	Chryfoftom, -	398
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pole of fhewing the fentiments and fludies of learned Chriftians of that age, to notice the following :

Eufebius, in the very beginning of the century, wrote expressly upon the diferepancies obfervable in the gospels, and likewife a treatife, in which he pointed out what things are related by four, what by three, what by two, and what by one evangelist\*. This author alfo teffifies, what is certainly a material piece of evidence, " that the writings of the apofiles had obtained fuch an efteem, as to be translated into every language both of Greeks and Barbarians, and to be diligently ftudied by all nations †." This teffimony was given about the year 300; how long *before* that date thefe transllations were made does not appear.

Damafus, bifhop of Rome, correfponded with St. Jerome upon the exposition of difficult texts of fcripture; and, in a letter still

\* Ib. vol. viii. p. 46. 7 Ib. p. 201. S 4 remaining

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remaining, defires Jerome to give him a clear explanation of the word Hofanna, found in the New Testament; " he (Damasus) having met with very different interpretations of it in the Greek and Latin commentaries of Catholic writers which he had read \*." This last clause she number and variety of commentaries then extant.

Gregory of Nyssen, at one time, appeals to the most exact copies of St. Mark's gofpel; at another time, compares together, and proposes to reconcile, the feveral accounts of the refurrection given by the four evangelist; which limitation proves, that there were no other hiftories of Chrift deemed authentic befide thefe, or included in the fame character with these. This writer observes, acutely enough, that the disposition of the clothes in the fepulchre, the napkin that was about our Saviour's head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itfelf, did not belpeak the terror

" Ib. vol. ix. p. 1c8.



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and hurry of thieves, and therefore refutes the ftory of the body being ftolen \*.

Ambrofe, bishop of Milan, remarked various readings in the Latin copies of the New Teftament, and appeals to the original Greek;

And Jerome, towards the conclusion of this century, put forth an edition of the New Testament in Latin, corrected, at least as to the gofpels, by Greek copies, " and those (he fays) ancient."

Lafly, Chryfoftom, it is well known, delivered and published a great many homilies, or fermons, upon the Gofpels and the Acts of the Aposles.

It is needlefs to bring down this article lower; but it is of importance to add, that there is no example of Christian writers of the three first centuries composing comments

\* Ib. vol. ix. p. 163.

upon

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upon any other books than those which are found in the New Testament, except the fingle one of Clement of Alexandria, commenting upon a book called the Revelation of Peter.

Of the ancient versions of the New Teftament, one of the most valuable is the Syriac. Syriac was the language of Paleftine when Christianity was there first established. And although the books of fcripture were written in Greek, for the purpole of a more extended circulation than within the precincts of Judea, yet it is probable that they would foon be translated into the vulgar language of the country where the religion first prevailed. Accordingly a Syriae tranflation is now extant, all along, fo far as it appears, ufed by the inhabitants of Syria, bearing many internal marks of high antiquity, fupported in its pretentions by the uniform tradition of the Eaft, and confirmed by the difcovery of many very ancient n.anufcripts in the libraries of Europe. It is about 200 vears fiace a bifhop of Antioch fent a copy

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of this translation into Europe, to be printed; and this feems to be the first time that the translation became generally known to these parts of the world. The Bishop of Antioch's Teftament was found to contain all our books, except the fecond epille of Peter, the fecond and third of John, and the Revelation; which books, however, have fince been discovered in that language in fome ancient manufcripts of Europe. But in this collection, no other book, bende what is in ours, appears ever to have had a place. And, which is very worthy of obtervation, the text trough preferved in a remote country, and without communication with ours, differs from ours very little, and in nothing shat is important<sup>\*</sup>.

\* Jones on the Canon, vol. i. c. 14.



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#### SECT. VII.

Our feriptures were received by ancient Christians of different fects and perfuasions, by many heretics as well as catholics, and were usually appealed to by both fides in the controversies which arose in those days.

HE three most ancient topics of controverfy amongst Christians, were, the authority of the Jewish constitution, the origin of evil, and the nature of Christ. Upon the first of these, we find, in very early times, one class of heretics rejecting the Old Testament entirely; another contending for the obligation of its law, in all its parts, throughout its whole entent, and over every one who fought acceptance with God. Upon the two latter subjects a natural, perhaps, and venial; but a fruitless, eager and impatient curiosity, prompted by the philosophy and

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and by the fcholaftic habits of the age, which carried men much into bold hypothefes and conjectural folutions, raifed, amongft fome who profeffed Chriftianity, very wild and unfounded opinions. I think there is no reafon to believe that the number of thefe bore any confiderable proportion to the body of the Chriftian church ; and amidft the difputes which fuch opinions neceffarily occafioned, it is a great fatisfaction to perceive, what in a vaft plurality of inftances we do

perceive, all fides recurring to the fame

I\*. Basilides lived near the age of the apostles, about the year 120, or, perhaps, sooner †. He rejected the Jewish institution, not as spurious, but as proceeding from a being inferior to the true Cod; and

\* The materials of the former part of this fection are taken from Dr. Lardner's hiltory of the heretics of the two first centuries, published fince his death, with additions, by the Rev. Mr. Hogg of Exeter, and inferted into the ninth volume of his works, of the edition of z788.

† Vol. ix. p. 271.

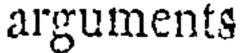
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in other respects advanced a scheme of theology widely different from the general doctrine of the Chriftian church, and which, as it gained over fome difciples, was warmly opposed by Christian writers of the second and third century. In these writings there is politive evidence, that Basilides received the gofpel of Matthew; and there is no fufficient proof that he rejected any of the other three; on the contrary, it appears that he wrote a commentary upon the gospel, fo copious as to be divided into twenty-four books\*.

II. The Valentinians appeared about the fame time ?. Their herefy confifted in certain notions concerning angelic natures, which can hardly be rendered intelligible to a modern reader. They feem, however, to have acquired as much importance as any of the sparatifies of that early age. Of this fect, Irenzus, who wrote A. D. 172, expressly records, that they endeavoured to fetch

\* Ib. vol. ix. ed. 1788, p. 305, 306. + Jb. p. 350, 351.



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arguments for their opinions from the evangelic and apoftolic writings\*. Heracleon one of the moft celebrated of the fect, and who lived probably fo early as the year 125, wrote commentaries upon Luke and John†. Some obfervations also of his upon Matthew are preferved by Origen ‡. Nor is there any reason to doubt that he received the whole New Teftament.

III. The Carpocratians were also an early

herefy, little, if at all, later than the two preceding §. Some of their opinions refembled what we at this day mean by Socinianifm. With refpect to the feriptures, they are fpecifically charged, by Irenæus and by Epiphanius, with endeavouring to pervert a paffage in Matthew, which amounts to a pofitive proof that they received that gofpel ||. Megatively, they are not accufed, by their adverfaries, of rejecting any part of the New Teftament.

\* Vol. 1. p. 333. + Vol. iv. cd. 1783, p. 352. 2 Ib. 353. § Ib. 209. || Ib. 318. IV. The

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IV. The Sethians, A. D.  $150^*$ ; the Montanists, A. D.  $156^+$ ; the Marcosians,  $160^+$ ; Hermogenes, A. D.  $180^\circ$ ; Praxias, A. D.  $196^\circ$ ; Artemon, A. D.  $200^\circ$ ; Theodotus, A. D.  $200^\circ$ ; all included under the denomination of heretics, and all engaged in controversies with Catholic Christians, received the scriptures of the New Testament.

V. Tatian, who lived in the year 172, went into many extravagant opinions, was the founder of a fect called Encratites, and was deeply involved in difputes with the Chriftians of that age; yet Tatian fo received the four gofpels, as to compose a harmony from them.

VI. From a writer, quoted by Eufebius, of about the year 200, it is apparent that they, who, at that time, contended for the mere humanity of Chrift, argued from the fcriptures; for they are accufed by this

writers

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writer, of making alterations in their copies, in order to favour their opinions\*.

VII. Origen's fentiments excited great controverfies, the Bishops of Rome and Alexandria, and many others, condemning, the Billiops of the East espousing them; yet there is not the finallest question, but that both the advocates and adverfaries of thefe opinions acknowledged the fame authority of scripture. In his time, which the reader will remember was about one hundred and fifty years after the fcriptures were published, many diffensions subsisted amongst Chriftians, with which they were reproached by Celfus; yet Origen, who has recorded this accufation without contradicting it, nevertheless testifies, that the four gospels were received without dispute, by the whole church of God under heaven #."

VIII. Paul of Samofata, about thirty years after Origen, fo diffinguished himfelf in the

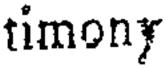
\* Ib. vol. iii. p. 46. + Ib. vol. iv. p. 642. Vol. I. T controverfy

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controverly concerning the nature of Chrift, as to be the fubject of two councils, or iynods, affembled at Antioch, upon his opinions. Yet he is not charged by his adverfaries with rejecting any book of the New Testament. On the contrary, Epiphanius, who wrote a hiftory of heretics a hundred years afterwards, fays, that Paul endeavoured to support his doctrine by texts of scripture. And Vincentius Lirinenfis, A.D. 434, fpeaking of Paul and other heretics of the fame age, has thefe words: Here, perhaps, fome one may afk, whether heretics also urge the testimony of scripture. They urge it indeed, explicitly and vehemently; for you may fee them flying through every book of the facred law \*."

IX. A controverfy at the fame time existed with the Noctians or Sabellians, who feem to have gone into the opposite extreme from that of Paul of Samofata and his followers. Yet, according to the express tef-

- # Ib. vol. xi. p. 158.



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timony of Epiphanius, Sabellius received all the fcriptures. And with both fects Catholic writers conftantly alledge the fcriptures, and reply to the arguments which their opponents drew from particular texts.

We have here, therefore, a proof that parties, who were the most opposite and irreconcileable to one another, acknowledged the authority of fcripture with equal deference.

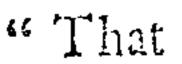
X. And as a general teftimony to the fame point, may be produced what was faid by one of the Bifhops of the council of Carthage, which was holden a little before this time. "I am of opinion that blafphemous and wicked heretics, who *pervert* the facred and adorable words of the feriptures, fhould be execrated \*." Undoubtedly what they perverted, they received.

XI. The Millennium, Novatianism, the

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baption of heretics, the keeping of Eafler, engaged alfo the attention and divided the opinions of Christians, at and before that time (and, by the way, it may be obferved, that fuch difputes, though on fome accounts to be blamed, shewed how much men were in earnest upon the subject); yet every one appealed for the grounds of his opinion to feripture authority. Dionyfius of Alexandria, who flourished A. D. 247, describing a conference or public dilputation, with the Millennarians of Egypt, confelles of them, though their adverfary, "that they embraced whatever could be made out by good arguments from the holy feriptures "." Novatus, A. D. 251, diffinguished by some rigid fentiments concerning the reception of those who had lapfed, and the founder of a numerous fect, in his few remaining works quotes the gofpel with the fame refpect as other Christians did; and concerning his followers the teftimony of Sccrates, who wrote about the year 440, is politive, viz.

\* Ib, vol. iv. p. 665.

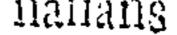


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" That in the difputes between the Catholies and them, each fide endeavoured to fupport itself by the authority of the divine feriptures \*."

XII. The Donatifls, who fprung up in the year 328, ufed the fame feriptures as we do. "Produce (faith Augustine) fome proof from the feriptures, whofe authority is common to us both †."

XIII. It is perfectly notorious, that, in the Arian controverfy, which arofe foon after the year 300, both fides appealed to the fame feriptures, and with equal profeffions of deference and regard. The Arians, in their council of Antioch, A. D. 341, pronounce, that, " if any one, contrary to the found doctrine of the feriptures, fay that the Son is a creature, as one of the creatures, let him be an anathema‡." They and the Atha-



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nafians mutually accufe each other of using unscriptural phrases; which was a mutual acknowledgement of the conclusive authority of fcripture.

XIV. The Prifcillianists, A. D. 378\*, the Pelagians, A. D. 405<sup>+</sup>, received the fame scriptures as we do.

XV. The teftimony of Chryfoftom, who

lived near the year 400, is fo politive in affirmation of the proposition which we maintain, that it may form a proper conclusion of the argument. " The general reception of the gospels is a proof that their hiftory is true and confiftent; for, fince the writing of the gospels, many herefies have arifen, holding opinions contrary to what is contained in them, who yet receive the gospels either entire or in part ‡." I am not moved by what may seem a deduction

\* Ib. vol. ix. p. 325.

+ Ib. vol. xi. p. 52.

† Ib. vol. x. p. 316. Zi.

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from Chrysoftom's testimony, the words "entire or in part;" for, if all the parts, which were ever questioned in our gospels, were given up, it would not affect the miraculous origin of the religion in the fmalleft dcgree: e.g.

Cerinthus is faid by Epiphanius to have received the gospel of Matthew, but not entire. What the omifions were does not appear. The common opinion, that he rejected the two first chapters, seems to have been a mistake \*. It is agreed, however, by all who have given any account of Cerinthus, that he taught that the Holy Ghoft (whether he meant by that name a perfon or a power) descended upon Jesus at his baptism; that Jesus from this time performed many miracles, and that he appeared after his death. He must have retained therefore the effential parts of the hiftory.

Of all the ancient heretics the most ex-

# Ih. vol. ix. ed. 1788, p. 322. T 4 <sup>\*</sup> traordinary

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traordinary was Marcion\*. One of his tenets was the rejection of the Old Teftament, as proceeding from an inferior and imperfect deity; and in purfuance of this hypothefis, he erafed from the New, and that, as it fhould feem, without entering into any critical reafons, every paffage which recognized the Jewish scriptures. He spared not a text which contradicted his opinion. It is reafonable to believe that Marcion treated books as he treated texts: yet this rafh and wild controverfialift published a recension, or chastifed edition, of St. Luke's gofpel, containing the leading facts, and all which is neceffary to authenticate the religion. This example affords proof, that there were always fome points, and those the main points, which neither wildness nor rafhnefs, neither the fury of oppolition nor the intemperance of controverfy, would venture to call in quession. There is no reafon to believe that Marcion, though full

<sup>9</sup> Ib. feel. ii. c. x. Alfo Michael. vol. i. c. i. fect. 27111.



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or refentment against the Catholic Christians, ever charged them with forging their books. " The Gofpel of St. Matthew, the Epiftle to the Hebrews, with those of St. Peter and St. James, as well as the Old Teflament in general (he faid), were writings not for Christians but for Jews #." This declaration thews the ground upon which Marcion proceeded in his mutilation of the feriptures, viz. his diflike of the pallages or the books. Marcion flourished about the year 130. Dr. Lardner, in his General Review, fums up this head of cvidence in the following words : "Noctus, Paul of Samofata, Sabellius, Marcellus, Photinus, the Novatians, Donatifts, Manicheans-, Priscillianist, befide Artemon, the Audians, the Arians, and divers others, all received most or all

\* I have tranfcribed this fentence from Michaelis (p. 38), who has not, however, referred to the authority upon which he attributes thefe words to Marcion.

† This must be with an exception, however, of Fauslus, who lived fo late as the year 384.

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the fame books of the New Teftament which the Catholics received; and agreed in a like refpect for them as writ by Apostles, or their disciples and companions \*."

\* Ib. vol. xii. p. 12.-Dr. Lardner's future enquiries fupplied him with many other inftances.

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### SECT. VIII.

The four Gospels, the Acts of the Aposles, thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, the first Epistle of John, and the first of Peter, were received without doubt by those who doubted concerning the other books which are included in our present Canon.

STATE this proposition, because, if made out, it shews that the authenticity of their books was a fubject amongst the early Chriftians of confideration and enquiry; and that, where there was cause of doubt, they did doubt; a circumstance which ftrengthens very much their testimony to fuch books as were received by them with full acquiescence.

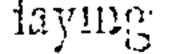
I. Jerome, in his account of Caius, who was probably a prefbyter of Rome, and who flourished near the year 200, records of him, that reckoning up only thirteen epistles

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epifiles of Paul, he fays the fourteenth, which is inferibed to the Hebrews, is not his; and then Jerome adds, "With the Romans to this day it is not looked upon as Paul's." This agrees in the main with the account given by Eufebius of the fame ancient author and his work; except that Eufebius delivers his own remark in more guarded terms, " And indeed to this very time, by *fome* of the Romans, this epiftle is

not thought to be the apofile's "."

II. Origon, about twenty years after Caius, quoting the epiftle to the Hebrews, obferves that fome might difpute the authority of that epiftle, and therefore proceeds to quote to the fame point, as *undoubted* books of feripture, the Gofpel of St. Matthew, the ACIs of the Apofiles, and Paul's first Epiftle to the Theffalonians  $\dagger$ . And in another place, this author fpeaks of the Epiftle to the Hebrews thus :— " The account come down to us is various, fome



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faying that Clement, who was bishop of Rome, wrote this epifile ; others, that it was Luke, the fame who writ the Gofpel and the Acts." Speaking also in the fame paragraph of Peter, "Peter (fays he) has left one epistle, acknowledged; let it be granted likewife that he wrote a fecond, for it is doubted of." And of John, "He has also left one epifile, of a very few lines; grant allo a fecond and a third, for all do not allow these to be genuine." Now let it be noted, that Origen, who thus diferiminates, and thus confesses his own doubts, and the doubts which fubfisted in his time, expressly witness concerning the four gospels, "that they alone are received without difpute by the whole church of God under heaven "."

III. Dionyfius of Alexandria, in the year 247, doubts concerning the Book of Revclation, whether it was written by St. John; ftates the grounds of his doubt; reprefents the diverfity of opinion concerning it, in his

\* lb. vol. iii. p. 234.

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own time, and before his time\*." Yet the fame Dionyfius uses and collates the four gospels, in a manner which shews that he entertained not the fmallest fuspicion of their authority, and in a manner alfo which fhews that they, and they alone, were received as authentic histories of Christ 7.

IV. But this fection may be faid to have been framed on purpose to introduce to the reader two remarkable passages, extant in Eusebius's ecclesiastical history. The first paffage opens with these words-" Let us observe the writings of the apostle John which are uncontradicted; and first of all must be mentioned, as acknowledged of all, the gofpel according to him, well known to all the churches under heaven." The author then proceeds to relate the occasions of writing the gofpels, and the reafons for placing St. John's the last, manifestly speaking of all the four as parallel in their authority, and in the certainty of their original ‡. The

> \* Ib. vol. iv. p. 670. + Ib. p. 661. t Ib. vol. viii. p. 90.

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second passage is taken from a chapter, the title of which is, " Of the Scriptures univerfally acknowledged, and of those that are not fuch." Eufebius begins his enumeration in the following manner:--" In the first place are to be ranked the facred four Gofpels, then the book of the Acts of the Apostles: after that are to be reckoned the Epiftles of Paul. In the next place, that called the first Epistle of John, and the Epistle of Peter, are to be efteemed authentic. After this is to be placed, if it be thought fit, the Revelation of John, about which we shall observe the different opinions at proper feafons. Of the controverted, but yet well known, or approved by the most, are that called the Epistle of James, and that of Jude, and the fecond of Peter, and the fecond and third of John, whether they are written by the evangelist, or another of the fame name"." He then preceeds to reckon up five others, not in our Canon, which he calls in one place *spurious*, in another controverted, meaning, as appears to

\* Ib. vol. viii. p. 89.

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me, nearly the same thing by these twowords \*.

It is manifest from this passage, that the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Aposses, (the parts of scripture with which our concern principally lies) were acknowledged without dispute, even by those who raised objections, or entertained doubts, about some other parts of the same collection. But the passage proves something more than this. The author was extremely conversant in the writings of Christians, which had been publissed from the commencement of the institution to his own time; and it was from these writings that he drew his knowledge of the character and reception of the books in question. That Eusebius recurred to this

\* That Eufebius could not intend, by the word rendered " fpurious," what we at prefent mean by it, is evident from a claufe in this very chapter, where, fpeaking of the Gofpels of Peter and Thomas, and Matthias and fome others, he fays, " They are not fo much as to be reckoned among the *purious*, but are to be rejected as altogether abfurd and intpious." Vol. viii. p. 98.

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medium of information, and that he had examined with attention this fpecies of proof; is shewn; first; by a passage in the very chapter we are quoting, in which, speaking of the books which he calls fpurious, "None (he fays) of the ecclefiaftical writers, in the fucceffion of the apostles, have vouchsafed to make any mention of them in their writings;" and fecondly, by another paffage of the fame work, wherein, speaking of the first epistle of Peter, " This (he fays) the presbyters of ancient times have quoted in their writings as undoubtedly genuine\*;" and then speaking of some other writings bearing the name of Peter, "We know (he fays) that they have not been delivered down to us in the number of catholic writings, forafmuch as no ecclefialtical writer of the ancients, or of our times, has made ule of teffimonies out of them." " But in the progress of this hiftory," the author proceeds, "we shall make it our business to shew, together with the fucceffions from the

\* Ib. p. 99. Vol. I. U apoftles,

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apoftles, what ecclefiaftical writers, in every age, have used such writings as these which are contradicted, and what they have faid with regard to the scriptures received in the New Testament, and acknowledged by all, and with regard to those which are not such \*."

After this it is reafonable to believe, that, when Eufebius states the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, as uncontradicted, uncontefted, and acknowledged by all; and when he places them in opposition, not only to those which were spurious in our fense of that term, but to those which were controverted, and even to those which were well known and approved by many, yet doubted of by fome; he reprefents not only the fenfe of his own age, but the refult of the evidence which the writings of prior ages, from the apostles' time to his own, had furnished to his inquiries. The opinion of Eufebius and his contemporaries appears to have been founded upon the testimony of writers

\* Ib. p. 111.



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whom they then called ancient : and we may obferve, that fuch of the works of these writers as have come down to our times, entirely confirm the judgment, and support the diffinction which Eulebius propofes. The books which he calls "books univerfally acknowledged," are in fact used and quoted in the remaining works of Christian writers, during the 250 years between the apostles' time and that of Eusebius, much more frequently than, and in a different manner from, those, the authority of which, he tells us, was disputed.



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### SECT. IX.

Our historical scriptures were attacked by the early adversaries of Christianity, as containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.

# I. IN EAR the middle of the second cen-

eury, Celfus, a heathen philosopher, wrote a professed treatife against Christianity. Τo this treatife, Origen, who came about fifty years after him, published an answer, in which he frequently recites his adverfary's words and arguments. The work of Celfus is lost; but that of Origen remains. Origen appears to have given us the words of Celfus, where he profess to give them, very faithfully; and, amongst other reasons for thinking fo, this is one, that the objection, as stated by him from Celfus, is fometimes stronger than his own answer. I think it also probable that Origen, in his answer, has retailed



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a large portion of the work of Celfus: "That it may not be fuspected (he fays) that we pass by any chapters, because we have no answers at hand, I have thought it best, according to my ability, to confute every thing proposed by him, not fo much observing the natural order of things, as the order which he has taken himfelf \*."

Celfus wrote about 100 years after the Gofpels were published; and therefore any notices of these books from him are extremely important for their antiquity. They are, however, rendered more fo by the character of the author; for the reception, credit, and notoriety of these books must have been well eftablished amongst Christians, to have made them fubjects of animadversion and opposition by strangers and by enemies. It evinces the truth of what Chryfoftom, two centuries afterwards, observed, that "the Gofpels, when written, were not hid in a corner or buried in obscurity, but they were

\* Ar. cont. Cell. 1. i. sect. 41,

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made known to all the world, before enemies as well as others, even as they are now \*.

1. Celfus, or the Jew whom he perfonates, ules thele words—" I could fay many things concerning the affairs of Jefus, and thole, too, different from thole written by the difciples of Jefus, but I purpofely omit them †." Upon this paffage it has been rightly obferved, that it is not eafy to believe, that if Celfus could have contradicted the difciples upon good evidence in any material point, he would have omitted to do fo; and that the affertion is, what Origen calls it, a mere oratorical flourifh.

It is fufficient however to prove, that, in the time of Celfus, there were books well known, and allowed to be written by the difciples of Jefus, which books contained a hiftory of him. By the term *difciple*, Celfus

\* In Mat. hom. i. 7.

7 Lardner's Jewish and Heathen Testim. vol. ii. 9.274.

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does not mean the followers of Jefus in general, for them he calls Chriftians, or believers, or the like, but those who had been taught by Jefus himfelf, i. e. his apostles and companions.

-5 2. In another passage, Celfus accuses the Chriftians of altering the gofpel\*. The acculation refers to fome variations in the readings of particular passages; for Celfus goes on to object, that when they are preffed hard, and one reading has been confuted, they difown that, and fly to another. We cannot perceive from Origen that Celfus fpecified any particular inflances, and without fuch specification the charge is of no value. But the true conclusion to be drawn from it is, that there were in the hands of the Chriftians, hiftories, which were even then of fome ftanding; for various readings and corruptions do not take place in recent productions.

The former quotation, the reader will \* Ib. p. 275.

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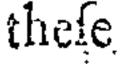
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remember; prov that these books were composed by the disciples of Jesus, sirictly fo called; the prefent quotation shews, that, though objections were taken by the adverfaries of the religion to the integrity of these books, none were made to their genuine ness.

3. In a third passage, the Jew, whom Celfus introduces, shuts up an argument in this manner:--" Thefe things then we have alledged to you out of your own writings, not needing any other weapons\*." It is manifelt that this boaft proceeds upon the supposition that the books, over which the writer affects to triumph, posselfelled an authority by which Christians confessed themselves to be bound.

4. That the books to which Celfus refers were no other than our prefent Gospels, is made out by his allufions to various paffages still found in these Gospels. Celsus takes notice of the genealogies, which fixes two of

\* Ib. p. 276,



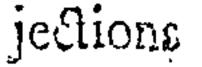
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thefe gospels; of the precepts, Resist not him that injures you, and, If a man strike thee on the one cheek, offer to him the other also\*; of the woes denounced by Christ; of his predictions; of his faying that it is impossible to ferve two masters †; of the purple robe, the crown of thorns, and the reed in his hand; of the blood that flowed from the body of Jesus upon the cross ‡, which circumstance is recorded by John alone; and (what is instar omnium for the purpose for which we produce it) of the difference in the accounts given of the resurrection by the evangelist, fome mentioning two angels at the fepulchre, others only one §.

It is extremely material to remark, that Celfus not only perpetually referred to the accounts of Chrift contained in the four Gofpels  $\parallel$ , but that he referred to no other accounts; that he founded none of his ob-

\* Ib. p. 276. + Ib. p. 277. + Ib. p. 280, 281. § Ib. p. 282.

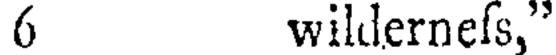
|| The particulars, of which the above are only a few, áre well collected by Mr. Bryant, p. 140.



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jections to Christianity upon any thing delivered in spurious gospels.

II. What Celfus was in the fecond century, Porphyry became in the third. His work, which was a large and formal treatife against the Christian religion, is not extant. We must be content therefore to gather his objections from Christian writers, who have noticed in order to anfwer them: and enough remains of this species of information, to prove completely, that Porphyry's animadverfions were directed against the contents of our prefent Gospels, and of the Acts of the Apostles; Porphyry confidering that to overthrow them was to overthrow the religion. Thus he objects to the repetition of a generation in St. Matthew's genealogy; to Matthew's call; to the quotation of a text from Isaiah, which is found in a plalm afcribed to Afaph; to the calling of the lake of Tiberias a sea; to the expression in St. Matthew, " the abomination of defolation ;" to the variation in Matthew and Mark upon the text " the voice of one crying in the



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wildernefs," Matthew citing it from Ifaias, Mark from the Prophets; to John's application of the term "Word;" to Chrift's change of intention about going up to the feaft of tabernacles (John vii. 8); to the judgement denounced by St. Peter upon Ananias and Sapphira, which he calls an imprecation of death \*.

The inftances here alledged ferve, in fome measure, to shew the nature of Porphyry's objections, and prove that Porphyry had read the Gospels with that fort of attention which a writer would employ who regarded them as the depositaries of the religion which he attacked. Belide these specifications, there exists in the writings of ancient Christians general evidence, that the places of foripture upon which Porphyry had remarked were very numerous.

In fome of the above cited examples, Porphyry, fpeaking of St. Matthew, calls him

\* Jewish and Heathen Test. vol. iii. p. 166 et seq.

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*your evangelift*; he also uses the term evangelists in the plural number. What was faid of Cellus is true likewise of Porphyry, that it does not appear that he confidered any history of Christ, except these, as having authority with Christians.

III. A third great writer against the Chriftian religion was the emperor Julian, whose work was composed about a century after that of Porphyry.

In various long extracts, transcribed from this work by Cyril and Jerome, it appears<sup>\*\*</sup>, that Julian noticed by name Matthew and Luke, in the difference between their genealogies of Chrift; that he objected to Matthew's application of the prophecy, "Out of Egypt have I called my fon" (ii. 15), and to that of " a virgin fhall conceive" (i. 22); that he recited fayings of Chrift, and various passages of his history, in the very words of the evangelists; in particular, that

\* Ib. vol. iv. p. 77 et feq.



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Jefus healed lame and blind people, and exorcifed demoniacs, in the villages of Bethfaida, and Bethany: that he alledged that none of Christ's disciples ascribed to him the creation of the world, except John; that neither Paul, nor Matthew, nor Luke, nor Mark, have dared to call Jefus, God; that John wrote later than the other evangelifts, and at a time when a great number of men in the cities of Greece and Italy were converted; that he alludes to the conversion of Cornelius and of Sergius Paulus, to Peter's vifion, to the circular letter fent by the apostles and elders at Jerufalem, which are all recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: by which quoting of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apoftles, and by quoting no other, Julian thews that thefe were the hiftorical books, and the only hiftorical books, received by Christians as of authority, and as the authentic memoirs of Jesus Christ, of his apostles, and of the doctrines taught by them. But Julian's testimony does fomething more than represent the judgement of the Christian church in his time. It discovers also his

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own. He himfelf expressly flates the early date of these records : he calls them by the names which they now bear. He all along supposes, he nowhere attempts to question, their genuinenefs.

The argument in favour of the books of the New Testament, drawn from the notice taken of their contents by the early writers against the religion, is very confiderable. It proves that the accounts, which Chriftians had then, were the accounts which we have now; that our prefent fcriptures were theirs. It proves, moreover, that neither Celfus in the fecond, Porphyry in the third, nor Julian in the fourth century, fulpected the authenticity of these books, or ever infinuated that Christians were mistaken in the authors to whom they afcribed them. Not one of them expressed an opinion upon this fubject different from that which was held by Chriftians. And when we confider how much it would have availed them to have caft a doubt upon this point, if they could; and how ready they shewed themselves to



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be, to take every advantage in their power; and that they were all men of learning and inquiry; their concession, or rather their fuffrage, upon the subject, is extremely valuable.

In the cafe of Porphyry, it is made ftill ftronger, by the confideration that he did in fact fupport himfelf by this fpecies of objection, when he faw any room for it, or when his acutenefs could fupply any pretence for alledging it. The prophecy of Daniel he attacked upon this very ground of fpurioufnefs, infifting that it was written after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and maintains his charge of forgery by fome, far-fetched indeed, but very fubtle criticifms. Concerning the writings of the New Teftament, no trace of this fufpicion is anywhere to be found in him \*.

\* Michaelis's Introduction to the New Teftament, vol. i. p. 43. Marsh's Translation.

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### SECT. X.

Formal catalogues of authentic scriptures were published, in all which our present sacred histories were included.

I HIS fpecies of evidence comes later than the reft; as it was not natural that cata-

logues of any particular clafs of books fhould be put forth until Chriftian writings became numerous; or until fome writings fhewed themfelves, claiming titles which did not belong to them, and thereby rendering it neceffary to feparate books of authority from others. But, when it does appear, it is extremely fatisfactory; the catalogues, though numerous, and made in countries at a wide diftance from one another, differing very little, differing in nothing which is material, and all containing the four Gofpels. To this laft article there is no exception.

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I. In the writings of Origen which remain, and in fome extracts preferved by Eusebius, from works of his which are now loft, there are enumerations of the books of fcripture, in which the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are difficulty and honourably specified, and in which no books appear befide what are now received ". The reader, by this time, will eafily recollect that the date of Origen's works is A. D. 230.

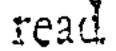
II. Athanafius, about a century afterwards, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament in form, contaising our fcriptures and no others; of which he fays, " In these alone the doctrine of religion is taught; let no man add to them, or take any thing from them "."

III. About 20 years after Athanafius, Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, set forth a catalogue of the books of fcripture publicly

\* Lardner's Cred. vol. iii. p. 234 et seq. vol. viii. р. 19б.

- + Ib. vol. viii. p. 223.
  - Vol. I.





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read at that time in the church of Jerufalem, exactly the fame as ours, except that the "Revelation" is omitted \*.

IV. And, fifteen years after Cyril, the Council of Laodicea delivered an authoritative catalogue of canonical feripture, like Cyril's, the fame as ours, with the omiffion of the "Revelation."

V. Catalogues now become frequent. Within thirty years after the laft date, that is, from the year 363 to near the conclusion of the fourth century, we have catalogues by Epiphanius †, by Gregory Nazianzen ‡, by Philafter bifhop of Brefcia in Italy §, by Amphilochius bifhop of Iconium, all, as they are fometimes called, *clean* catalogues (that is, they admit no books into the number befide what we now receive), and all, for every purpose of historic evidence, the fame as ours ||.

VI. Within

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VI. Within the fame period, Jerome, the moft learned Christian writer of his age, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament, recognizing every book now received, with the intimation of a doubt concerning the Epistle to the Hebrews alone, and taking not the least notice of any book which is not now received \*.

VII. Contemporary with Jerome, who lived in Paleftine, was St. Augustine in Africa, who published likewise a catalogue, without joining to the feriptures, as books of authority, any other ecclesiaftical writing whatever, and without omitting one which we at this day acknowledge <sup>†</sup>.

VIII. And with these concurs another contemporary writer, Rufen, presbyter of Aquileia, whose catalogue, like theirs, is perfect and unmixed, and concludes with

must have been an accidental mistake, either in him, or in fome copyist of his work; for he elfewhere expressly refers to this book, and aferibes it to Luke.

<sup>\*</sup> Ib. vol. x. p. 77. + Ib. p. 213.



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thefe remarkable words: "Thefe are the volumes which the Fathers have included in the canon, and out of which they would have us prove the doctrine of our faith \*."

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### SECT. XI.

These propositions cannot be predicated of any of those books which are commonly called apocryphal books of the New Teftament.

not know that the objection taken

from apocryphal writings is at prefent much relied upon by fcholars. But there are many, who, hearing that various gospels exifted in ancient times under the names of the apofiles, may have taken up a notion, that the felection of our prefent gofpels from the reft, was rather an arbitrary or accidental choice, than founded in any clear and certain cause of preference. To these it may be very useful to know the truth of the cafe. I observe therefore,

I. That, befide our Gospels and the Acts of the Apofiles, no Christian history, claim-



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ing to be written by an apoftle or apoftelical man, is quoted within three hundred years after the birth of Chriss, by any writer now extant, or known; or, if quoted, is not quoted with marks of censure and rejection.

I have not advanced this affertion without inquiry; and I doubt not, but that the paffages cited by Mr. Jones and Dr. Lardner, u der the ieveral titles which the apocryphal books bear; or a reference to the places where they are mentioned, as collected in a very accurate table, published in the year 1773 by the Rev. J. Atkinfon; will make out the truth of the proposition to the fatisfaction of every fair and competent judgment. If there be any book which may feem to form an exception to the obfervation, it is a Hebrew Golpel, which was circulated under the various titles of the Gofpel according to the Hebrews, the Gofpel of the Nazarenes, of the Ebionites, fometimes called of the Twelve, by fome afcribed to St. Matthew. This Golpel is once, and only

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once, cited by Clement Alexandrinus, who lived, the reader will remember, in the latter part of the fecond century, and which fame Clement quotes one or other of our four Gofpels in almost every page of his work. It is also twice mentioned by Origen, A. D. 230; and both times with marks of diminution and diferedit. And this is the ground upon which the exception flands. But what is still more material to observe is, that this Gospel, in the main, agreed with

our present Gospel of St. Matthew ".

Now if, with this account of the apocryphal Gofpels, we compare what we have read concerning the canonical feriptures in the preceding fections; or even recollect that general, but well-founded, affertion of Dr. Lardner, "That in the remaining works of Irengus, Clement of Alexandria,

\* In applying to this Gofpel, what Jerome in the latter end of the fourth century has mentioned of a Hebrew Gofpel, I think it probable that we fometimes cenfound it with a Hebrew copy of St. Matthew's Gofpel, whether an original or verfion, which was then extant.

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and Tertullian, who all lived in the two first centuries, there are more and larger quotations of the finall volume of the New Teftament than of all the works of Cicero, by writers of all characters, for feveral ages ";" and if to this we add, that, notwithstanding the lofs of many works of the primitive times of Christianity, we have, within the above-mentioned period, the remains of Christian writers, who lived in Palestine, Syria, Afia Minor, Egypt, the part of Africa that used the Latin tongue, in Crete, Greece, Italy and Gaul, in all which remains references are found to our evangelifts; I apprehend, that we shall perceive a clear and broad line of division, between those writings, and all others pretending to fimilar authority.

II. But befide certain *biflories* which affumed the names of Apoftles, and which were forgeries properly fo called, there were fome other Chriftian writings, in the whole or in part of an hiftorical nature, which,

\* Lard. Cred. vol. xii. p. 53.

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though not forgeries, are denominated apocryphal, as being of uncertain or of no authority.

Of this fecond clafs of writings I have found only two which are noticed by any author of the three firft centuries, without express terms of condemnation; and thefe are, the one, a book entitled the Preaching of Peter, quoted repeatedly by Clement Alexandrinus, A. D. 196; the other, a book entitled the Revelation of Peter, upon which the above mentioned Clement Alexandrinus is faid, by Eufebius, to have written notes; and which is twice cited in a work ftill extant, aferibed to the fame author.

I conceive therefore, that the proposition we have before advanced, even after it hath been fubjected to every exception, of every kind, that can be alledged, feparates, by a wide interval, our historical foriptures from all other writings which profess to give an account of the fame fubject.

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We may be permitted however to add,

1. That there is no evidence that any fpurious or apocryphal books whatever exifted in the firft century of the Chriftian æra; in which century all our hiftorical books are proved to have been extant. "There are no quotations of any fuch books in the apoftolical fathers, by whom I mean Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp, whofe writings reach from about the year of our Lord 70, to the year 108;" (and fome of whom have quoted each and every one of our hiftorical feriptures) "I fay this," adds Dr. Lardner, "becaufe I think it has been proved \*."

2. These apocryphal writings were not read in the churches of Christians;

3. Were not admitted into their volume;

4. Do not appear in their catalogues;

\* Ib. vol. xii. p. 158.

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5. Were not noticed by their adversaries;

6. Were not alledged by different parties, as of authority in their controverfies;

7. Were not the fubjects, amongst them, of commentaries, versions, collations, expofitions.

Finally; befide the filence of three centuries, or evidence, within that time, of their

rejection, they were, with a confent nearly univerfal, reprobated by Chriftian writers of fucceeding ages.

Although it be made out by these observations, that the books in queflion never obtained any degree of credit and notoriety, which can place them in competition with our feriptures, yet it appears from the writings of the fourth century, that many fuch existed in that century, and in the century preceding it. It may be difficult at this distance of time to account for their origin. Perhaps the most probable explication is,

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that they were in general composed with a defign of making a profit by the fale. Whatever treated of the fubject would find purchafers. It was an advantage taken of the pious curiofity of unlearned Chriftians. With a view to the fame purpose they were many of them adapted to the particular opinions of particular fects, which would naturally promote their circulation amongst the favourers of those opinions. After all, they were probably much more obfcure than we imagine. Except the Gospel according to the Hebrews, there is none of which we hear more than the Gospel of the Egyptians; yet there is good reafon to believe that Clement, a prefbyter of Alexandria in Egypt A. D. 184, and a man of almost universal reading, had never seen it\*. A Gofpel according to Peter, was another of the most ancient books of this kind; yet Scrapion, bishop of Antioch A. D. 200, had not read it, when he heard of fuch a book being in the hands of the Christians of Rhoffus in Cilicia; and speaks of obtaining a

\* Jones, vol. i. p. 243.



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fight of this Gospel from some sectaries who used it\*. Even of the Gospel of the Hebrews, which confessedly stands at the head of the catalogue, Jerome, at the end of the fourth century, was glud to procure a copy by the favour of the Nazareans of Berea. Nothing of this fort ever happened, or could have happened, concerning our Gofpels.

One thing is observable of all the apocryphal Christian writings, viz. that they proceed upon the same fundamental history of Chrift and his apofiles, as that which is difclosed in our fcriptures. The million of Chrift, his power of working miracles, his communication of that power to the apofiles, his paffion, death and refurrection, are affumed or afferted by every one of them. The names under which fome of them came forth, are the names of mon of eminence in our hiftories. What these books give, are not contradictions, but unauthorifed addi-

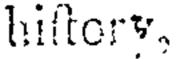
\* Lard. Cred. vol. ii. p. 557.

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tions. The principal facts are supposed, the principal agents the fame; which fhews that these points were too much fixed to be altered or difputed.

If there be any book of this description, which appears to have imposed upon some confiderable number of learned Christians, it is the Sybilline oracles; but, when we reflect upon the circumstances which facilitated that imposture, we shall cease to wonder either at the attempt or its fuccefs. It was at that time univerfally underftood, that fuch a prophetic writing exifted. Its contents were kept fecret. This fituation afforded to fome one a hint, as well as an opportunity, to give out a writing under this name, favourable to the already eftablished perfuation of Christians, and which writing, by the aid and recommendation of these circumstances, would in fome degree, it is probable, be received. Of the ancient forgery we know but little; what is now produced could not, in my opinion, have imposed upon any one. It is nothing elfe than the gofpel



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hiftory, woven into verfe; perhaps was at first, rather a fiction, than a forgery; an exercise of ingenuity more than an attempt to deceive.

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#### CHAP.

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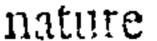
#### CHAP. X.

#### Recapitulation.

THE reader will now be pleafed to recollect, that the two points which form the fubject of our prefent difcuffion, are, firft, that the founder of Christianity, his affociates, and immediate followers, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and fufferings; fecondly, that they did fo, in attestation of the miraculous history recorded in our feriptures, and folcy in confequence of their belief of the truth of that history.

The argument, by which these two propositions have been maintained by us, stands thus:

No historical fact, I apprehend, is more certain, than that the original propagators of Christianity voluntarily subjected themselves to lives of fatigue, danger, and suffering, in the profecution of their undertaking. The



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nature of the undertaking; the character of the perfons employed in it; the opposition of their tenets to the fixed opinions and expectations of the country, in which they first advanced them; their undiffembled condemnation of the religion of all other countries; their total want of power, authority, or force, render it in the higheft degree probable that this must have been the cafe. The probability is increased, by what we know of the fate of the founder of the institution, who was put to death for his attempt; and by what we also know of the cruel treatment of the converts to the inflitution, within thirty years after its commencement: both which points are attefted by heathen writers, and, being once admitted, leave it very incredible that the primitive emiffaries of the religion, who exercised their ministry, first, amongst the people who had destroyed their master, and, afterwards, amongst those who perfecuted their converts, should themfelves escape with impunity, or pursue their purpose in ease and fafety. This probabi-Vol. I. lity, ¥

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lity, thus fustained by foreign testimony, is advanced, I think, to historical certainty, by the evidence of our own books; by the accounts of a writer who was the companion of the perfons whole fufferings he relates; by the letters of the perfons themfelves; by predictions of perfecutions afcribed to the founder of the religion, which predictions would not have been inferted in his hiftory, much lefs have been ffudioufly dwelt upon, if they had not accorded with the event, and which, even if falfely afcribed to him, could only have been fo afcribed becaufe the event fuggested them; lastly, by inceffant exhortations to fortitude and patience, and by an earneftnefs, repetition, and urgency upon the fubject, which were unlikely to have appeared, if there had not been, at the time, fome extraordinary call for the exercife of thefe virtues.

It is made out alfo, I think with fufficient evidence, that both the teachers and converts of the religion, in confequence of their

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their new profession, took up a new course of life and behaviour.

The next great queffion is, what they did this FOR. That it was for a miraculous ftory of fome kind or other, is to my apprehenfion extremely manifest; because, as to the fundamental article, the defignation of the perfon, viz. that this particular perfon, Jefus of Nazareth, ought to be received as the Meffiah, or as a meffenger from God, they neither had, nor could have, any thing but miracles to ftand upon. That the exertions and fufferings of the apoftles were for the ftory which we have now, is proved by the confideration that this flory is tranfmitted to us by two of their own number, and by two others perfonally connected with them; that the particularity of the narrative proves, that the writers claimed to poffels circumstantial information, that from their fituation they had full opportunity of acquiring fuch information, that they certainly, at least, knew what their colleagues, ·Y 2 their

their companions, their mafters taught; that each of these books contains enough to prove the truth of the religion; that, if any one of them therefore be genuine, it is fufficient; that the genuineness however of all of them is made out, as well by the general arguments which evince the genuineness of the most undifputed remains of antiquity, as alfo by peculiar and specific proofs, viz. by citations from them in writings belonging to a period immediately contiguous to that in which they were published; by the diftinguished regard paid by early Christians to the authority of thele books (which regard was manifested by their collecting of them into a volume, appropriating to that volume titles of peculiar respect, translating them into various languages, digefting them into harmonies, writing commentaries upon them, and, still more confpicuously, by the reading of them in their public affemblies in all parts of the world); by an universal agreement with respect to these books, whilst doubts were entertained concerning fome others;

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others; by contending fects appealing to them; by the early adverfaries of the religion not difputing their genuinenefs, but, on the contrary, treating them as the depofitaries of the hiftory upon which the religion was founded; by many formal catalogues of thefe, as of certain and authoritative writings, published in different and diftant parts of the Chriftian world; laftly, by the absence or defect of the above-cited topics of evidence, when applied to any other histories of the fame subject.

Thefe are firong arguments to prove, that the books actually proceeded from the authors whofe names they bear (and have always borne, for there is not a particle of evidence to fhew that they ever went under any other); but the firicit genuinenels of the books is perhaps more than is neceffary to the fupport of our proposition. For even fupposing that, by reason of the filence of antiquity, or the loss of records, we knew not who were the writers of the four Go-Y 3 fpels,

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spels, yet the fact, that they were received as authentic accounts of the transaction upon which the religion refted, and were received as fuch by Christians at or near the age of the apofiles, by those whom the aposles had taught, and by focieties which the apolles had founded; this fact, I fay, connected with the confideration, that they are corroborative of each other's teftimony, and that they are farther corroborated by another contemporary hiftory, taking up the ftory where they had left it, and, in a narrative built upon that flory, accounting for the rife and production of changes in the world, the effects of which fubfift at this day; connected, moreover, with the confirmation which they receive, from letters written by the apofiles themselves, which both affume the fame general ftory, and, as often as occasions lead them to do fo, allude to particular parts of it; and connected alfo with the reflection, that if the apoftles delivered any different ftory, it is loft (the prefent and no other being referred to by a leries

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feries of Chriftian writers, down from their age to our own; being likewife recognized in a variety of inftitutions, which prevailed, early and univerfally, amongft the difciples of the religion); and that fo great a change, as the oblivion of one ftory and the fubftitution of another, under fuch circumftances, could not have taken place: this evidence would be deemed, I apprehend, fufficient to prove concerning thefe books, that, whoever were the authors of them, they exhibit the ftory which the apoftles told, and for which, confequently, they acted, and they fuffered.

If it be fo, the religion muft be true. Thefe men could not be deceivers. By only not bearing teftimony, they might have avoided all their fufferings, and have lived quietly. Would men in fuch circumftances pretend to have feen what they never faw; affert facts which they had no knowledge of; go about lying, to teach virtue; and, though not only convinced of Chrift's be- $Y_4$  ing

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ing an impostor, but having feen the fuccels of his imposture in his crucifixion, yet perfist in carrying it on; and fo perfist, as to bring upon themselves, for nothing, and with a full knowledge of the consequence, enmity and hatred, danger and death?

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# Of the Direct Historical Evidence of Christianity.

#### PROP.II.

#### CHAP. I.

Our first proposition was, "That there is fatisfactory evidence, that many, pretending to be original witheffes of the Chriftian miracles, paffed their lives in labours, dangers, and fufferings, voluntarily undertaken and undergone, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and folely in confequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and that they also fubmitted, from the fame motives, to new rules of conduct."

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Our fecond proposition, and which now remains to be treated of, is, "That there is NOT fatisfactory evidence, that ferfous firetending to be original witheffes of any other finilar miracles, have acted in the fume manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and folely in confequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts."

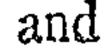
I ENTER upon this part of my argu-

ment, by declaring how far my belief in miraculous accounts goes. If the reformers in the time of Wickliff, or of Luther; or those of England, in the time of Henry the Eighth, or of Queen Mary; or the founders of our religious fects fince, such as were Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley in our own times; had undergone the life of toil and exertion, of danger and fufferings, which we know that many of them did undergo, for a miraculous story; that is to fay, if they had founded their public minifiry upon the allegation of miracles wrought within their own knowledge, and upon narratives

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ratives which could not be refolved into delution or miftake; and if it had appeared, that their conduct really had its origin in these accounts, I should have believed them. Or, to borrow an inftance which will be familiar to every one of my readers, if the late Mr. Howard had undertaken his labours and journeys in attestation, and in confequence of a clear and fenfible miracle, I should have believed him also. Or, to represent the fame thing under a third fupposition; if Socrates had professed to perform public miracles at Athens; if the friends of Socrates, Phædo, Cebes, Crito, and Simmias, together with Plato, and many of his followers, relying upon the atteftation which these miracles afforded to his pretentions, had, at the hazard of their lives, and the certain expence of their eafe and tranquillity, gone about Greece, after his death, to publish and propagate his doctrines; and if thefe things had come to our knowledge, in the fame way as that in which the life of Socrates is now transmitted to us, through the hands of his companions



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and disciples, that is, by writings received without doubt as theirs, from the age in which they were published to the prefent, I should have believed this likewife. And my belief would, in each cafe, be much ftrengthened, if the fubject of the million were of importance to the conduct and happinefs of human life; if it teftified any thing which it behoved mankind to know from fuch authority; if the nature of what it delivered, required the fort of proof which it alledged; if the occasion was adequate to the interpolition, the end worthy of the means. In the laft cafe my faith would be much confirmed, if the effects of the tranfaction remained; more especially, if a change had been wrought, at the time, in the opinion and conduct of fuch numbers, as to lay the foundation of an inflitution, and of a fystem of doctrines, which had fince overfpread the greatest part of the civilized world. I should have believed, I fay, the testimony, in these cases; yet none of them do more than come up to the apoftolic hiftory. If · 6

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If any one choose to call assent to its evidence credulity, it is at least incumbent upon him to produce examples in which the fame evidence hath turned out to be fallacious. And this contains the precife queflion which we are now to agitate.

In stating the comparison between our evidence, and what our adverfaries may bring into competition with ours, we will divide the diffinctions which we wish to propofe into two kinds, those which relate to the proof, and those which relate to the miracles. Under the former head we may lay out of the cafe,

I. Such accounts of fupernatural events as are found only in hiftories by fome ages posterior to the transaction, and of which it is evident that the hiftorian could know little more than his reader. Ours is contemporary hiftory. This difference alone removes out of our way, the miraculous hiftory of Pythagoras, who lived five hundred years before the Christian æra, written by Porphyry and Jamblicus, who lived

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three hundred years after that æra; the prodigies of Livy's hiftory; the fables of the heroic ages; the whole of the Greek and Roman, as well as of the Gothic mythology; a great part of the legendary hiftory of Popish faints, the very best attested of which is extracted from the certificates that are exhibited during the process of their canonization, a ceremony which feldom takes place till a century after their deaths. It applies alfo with confiderable force to the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, which are contained in a folitary history of his life, published by Philostratus, above a hundred years after his death; and in which, whether Philostratus had any prior account to guide him, depends upon his fingle unfupported affertion. Also to some of the miracles of the third century, effectially to one extraordinary inftance, the account of Gregory, bishop of Neocesarea, called Thaumaturgus, delivered in the writings of Gregory of Nyssen, who lived one hundred and thirty years after the fubject of his panegyric.

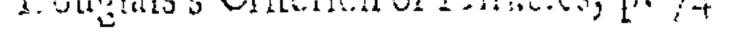
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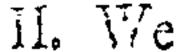
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'The value of this circumstance is shewn to have been accurately exemplified in the hiftory of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the order of Jesuits. His life, written by a companion of his, and by one of the order, was published about fisteen years after his death. In which life, the author, fo far from aferibing any miracles to Ignatius, induffrioufly flates the reafons why he was not invefied with any fuch power. The life was republished fifteen years afterwards, with the addition of many circumftances, which were the fruit, the author fays, of further enquiry, and of diligent examination; but still with a total filence about miracles. When Ignatius had been dead near fixty years, the Jefuits, conceiving a with to have the founder of their order placed in the Roman calendar, began, as it should feem, for the first time, to attribute to him a catalogue of miracles, which could not then be diffinctly differoved; and which there was, in these who governed the church, a ftreng difpolition to admit upon the ficadereft proofs.

· Douglass's Criterion of Miraeles, p. 74

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II. We may lay out of the cafe, accounts published in one country, of what passed in a didant country, without any proof that such accounts were known or received at home. In the cafe of Christianity, Judea, which was the fcene of the transaction, was the centre of the miffion. The ftory was published in the place in which it was acted. The church of Chrift was first planted at Jerufalem itself. With that church others corresponded. From thence the primitive teachers of the inflitution went forth; thither they affembled. The church of Jerufalem, and the feveral churches of Judea, fublifted from the beginning, and for many ages\*; received alfo the fame books, and the fame accounts, as other churches did.

This diffinction difposes, amongst others, of the above mentioned miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, most of which are related to have been performed in India, no evidence remaining that either the miracles afcribed

\* The fuccellion of many eminent bishops of Jerufalem, in the three first centuries, is distincely preferved, as Alexander, A. D. 212, who fucceeded Narciffus,

#### then 116 years old.



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to him, or the hiftory of those miracles, were ever heard of in India. Those of Francis Xavier, the Indian millionary, with many others of the Romish breviary, are liable to the fame objection, viz. that the accounts of them were published at a vast diftance from the fuppoled fcene of the wonders \*.

III. We lay out of the cafe transfert rumours. Upon the first publication of an

extraordinary account, or even of an article of ordinary intelligence, no one, who is not perfonally acquainted with the tranfaction, can know whether it be true or falfe, because any man may publish any ftory. It is in the future confirmation, or contradiction, of the account; in its permanency, or its disappearance; its dying away into silence, or its increasing in notoriety; its being followed up by fublequent accounts, and being repeated in different and independent accounts, that folid truth is diffinguished from fugitive lies. This diffinction

\* Doug. Crit. p. E.J.

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is altogether on the fide of Chriftianity. The flory did not drop. On the contrary, it was fucceeded by a train of action and events dependent upon it. The accounts, which we have in our hands, were composed after the first reports must have fubfided. They were followed by a train of writings upon the fubject. The historical testimonies of the transaction were many and various, and connected with letters, discourses, controversies, apologies, successively produced

#### by the fame transaction.

IV. We may lay out of the cafe what I call *naked* hiftory. It has been faid, that if the prodigies of the Jewifh hiftory had been found only in fragments of Manetho, or Berofus, we fhould have paid no regard to them: and I am willing to admit this. If we knew nothing of the fact, but from the fragment; if we posselfed no proof that these accounts had been credited and acted upon, from times, probably, as ancient as the accounts themfelves; if we had no visible effects connected with the history, no fubfequent

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sequent or collateral testimony to confirm it; under these circumstances, I think that it would be undeferving of credit. But this certainly is not our cafe. In appreciating the evidence of Christianity, the books are to be combined with the inflitution; with the prevalency of the religion at this day; with the time and place of its origin, which are acknowledged points; with the circumftances of its rife and progrefs, as collected from external hiftory; with the fact of our prefent books being received by the votaries of the inflitution from the beginning; with that of other books coming after these, filled with accounts of effects and confequences refulting from the transaction, or referring to the transaction, or built upon it; lastly, with the confideration of the number and variety of the books themfelves, the different writers from which they proceed, the different views with which they were written, fo difagreeing as to repel the fuspicion of confederacy, fo agreeing as to fhew that they were founded in a common original, *i.e.* in a ftory fubstantially the fame. Whether 4 2

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ther this proof be satisfactory or not, it is properly a cumulation of evidence, by no means a naked or folitary record.

V. A mark of hiftorical truth, although only a certain way, and to a certain degree, is particularity, in names, dates, places, circumftances, and in the order of events preceding or following the transaction : of which kind, for inftance, is the particularity in the description of St. Paul's voyage and shipwreck, in the 27th chapter of the Acts, which no man, I think, can read without being convinced that the writer was there; and also in the account of the cure and examination of the blind man, in the ninth chapter of St. John's Gofpel, which bears every mark of perfonal knowledge on the part of the hiftorian<sup>#</sup>. I do not deny that fiction has often the particularity of truth; but then it is of fludied and elaborate fiction, or of a formal attempt to deceive, that we observe this. Since, however, experience

\* Both these chapters ought to be read for the fake of this very obfervation.



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proves that particularity is not confined to truth, I have stated that it is a proof of truth only to a certain extent, i. e. it reduces the question to this, whether we can depend or not upon the *probity* of the relator: which is a confiderable advance in our prefent argument; for an express attempt to deceive, in which cafe alone particularity can appear without truth, is charged upon the evangelifts by few. If the hiftorian acknowledge himfelf to have received his intelligence from others, the particularity of the narrative shews, primâ facie, the accuracy of his enquiries, and the fullness of his information. This remark belongs to St. Luke's hiftory. Of the particularity which we alledge, many examples may be found in all the Gospels. And it is very difficult to conceive, that fuch numerous particularities, as are almost everywhere to be met with in the scriptures, should be raised out of nothing, or be fpun out of the imagination without any fact to go upon #.

\* "There is always fome truth where there are confiderable particularities related; and they always





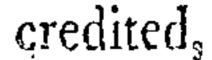
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It is to be remarked, however, that this particularity is only to be looked for in direct history. It is not natural in references or allutions, which yet, in other respects, often afford, as far as they go, the most unfulpicious evidence.

VI. We lay out of the cafe fuch ftories of supernatural events, as require, on the part of the hearer, nothing more than an otiose affent; ftories upon which nothing depends, in which no interest is involved, nothing is to be done or changed in confequence of believing them. Such ftories are

feem to bear fome proportion to one another. Thus there is a great want of the particulars, of time, place, and perfons, in Manetho's account of the Egyptian Dynasties, Etesias's of the Asiyrian Kings, and those which the technical chronologers have given of the ancient kingdoms of Greece; and, agreeably thereto, these accounts have much fiction and falsehood, with some truth: whereas Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian War, and Cæsar's of the War in Gaul, in both which the particulars of time, place, and perfons are mentioned, are univerfally esteemed true to a great degree of exactness." Hartley, vol. ii. p. 109.



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credited, if the careless affent that is given to them deferve that name, more by the indolence of the hearer, than by his judgement; or, though not much credited, are paffed from one to another without enquiry or refiftance. To this cafe, and to this cafe alone, belongs what is called the love of the marvellous. I have never known it carry men further. Men do not fuffer perfecution from the love of the marvellous. Of the indifferent nature we are fpeaking of, are most vulgar errors and popular superstitions: most, for instance, of the current reports of apparitions. Nothing depends upon their being true or false. But not, surely, of this kind were the alledged miracles of Chrift and his aposiles. They decided, if true, the most important question upon which the human mind can fix its anxiety. They claimed to regulate the opinions of mankind, upon fubjects in which they are not only deeply concerned, but usually refractory and obflinate. Men could not be utterly carclels in fuch a cafe as this. If a Jew took up the flory, he found his darling par-



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tiality to his own nation and law wounded; if a Gentile, he found his idolatry and polytheifm reprobated and condemned. Whoever entertained the account, whether Jew or Gentile, could not avoid the following reflection :--- " If these things be true, I must give up the opinions and principles in which I have been brought up, the religion in which my fathers lived and died." It is not conceivable that a man fhould do this upon any idle report or frivolous account, or, indeed, without being fully fatisfied and convinced of the truth and credibility of the narrative to which he trufted. But it did not ftop at opinions. They who believed Christianity, acted upon it. Many made it the express business of their lives to publish the intelligence. It was required of those who admitted that intelligence, to change forthwith their conduct and their principles, to take up a different course of life, to part with their habits and gratifications, and begin a new set of rules, and fystem of behaviour. The aposles, at least, were interested not to facrifice their eafe, their fortunes, and

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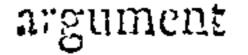
and their lives for an idle tale; multitudes befide them were induced, by the fame tale, to encounter opposition, danger, and fufferings.

If it be faid, that the mere promife of a future flate would do all this; I answer, that the mere promife of a future state, without any evidence to give credit or affurance to it, would do nothing. A few wandering fishermen talking of a refurrection of the dead could produce no effect. If it be further faid, that men eafily believe what they anxioufly defire, I again answer that, in my opinion, the very contrary of this is nearer to the truth. Anxiety of defire, earneftness of expectation, the vaftnefs of an event, rather causes men to disbelieve, to doubt, to dread a fallacy, to diftruft, and to examine. When our Lord's refurrection was first reported to the apofiles, they did not believe, we are told, for joy. This was natural, and is agreeable to experience.

VII. We have laid out of the cafe those accounts

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accounts which require no more than a fimple affent; and we now alfo lay out of the cafe those which come merely in affirmance of opinions already formed. This laft circumflance is of the utmost importance to notice well. It has long been observed, that Popish miracles happen in Popish countries; that they make no converts: which proves that ftories are accepted, when they fall in with principles already fixed, with the public fentiments, or with the fentiments of a party already engaged on the fide the miracle fupports, which would not be attempted to be produced in the face of enemies, in opposition to reigning tenets or favourite prejudices, or when, if they be believed, the belief must draw men away from their preconceived and habitual opinions, from their modes of life and rules of action. In the former cafe, men may not only receive a miraculcus account, but may both act and fulfer on the fide, and in the caufe, which the miracle supports, yet not act or sufier sør the miracle, but in pursuance of a prior yerfuafion. The miracle, like any other



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argument which only confirms what was before believed, is admitted with little examination. In the moral, as in the natural world, it is change which requires a caufe. Men are eafily fortified in their old opinions, driven from them with great difficulty. Now, how does this apply to the Chriftian hiftory? The miracles, there recorded, were wrought in the midst of enemies, under a government, a priefthood, and a magistracy, decidedly and vehemently adverfe to them, and to the pretentions which they supported. They were Protestant miracles in a Popish country; they were Popish miracles in the midst of Proteftants. They produced a change: they eftablished a society upon the spot, adhering to the belief of them; they made converts; and those who were converted, gave up to the testimony their most fixed opinions and most favourite prejudices. 'I hey who acted and fuffered in the caufe, acted and fuffered for the miracles; for there was no anterior perfuation to induce them, no prior reverence, prejudice, or partiality, to take hold of. Jefus had not one follower when



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he set up his claim. His miracles gave birth to his fect. No part of this description belongs to the ordinary evidence of Heathen or Popish miracles. Even most of the miracles alledged to have been performed by Chriftians, in the fecond and third century of its æra, want this confirmation. It constitutes indeed a line of partition between the origin and the progress of Christianity. Frauds and fallacies might mix themfelves with the progrefs, which could not poffibly take place in the commencement of the religion; at least, according to any laws of human conduct that we are acquainted with. What should suggest to the first propagators of Christianity, especially to sistermen, taxgatherers, and hufbandmen, fuch a thought as that of changing the religion of the world; what could bear them through the difficulties in which the attempt engaged them; what could procure any degree of fuccefs to the attempt; are questions which apply, with great force, to the fetting out of the institution, with less, to every future stage of it.

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To hear fome men talk, one would suppose the setting up of a religion by miracles to be a thing of every day's experience; whereas the whole current of hiftory is against it. Hath any founder of a new fect amongst Christians pretended to miraculous powers, and fucceeded by his pretentions? "Were these powers claimed or exercised by the founders of the fects of the Waldenfes and Albigentes? Did Wickliff in England pretend to it? Did Huss or Jerome in Bohemia? Did Luther in Germany, Zuinglius in Switzerland, Calvin in France, or any of the reformers advance this plea \*?" The French prophets, in the beginning of the prefent century, ventured to alledge miraculous evidence, and immediately ruined their caufe by their temerity. " Concerning the religion of ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, of China, a single miracle cannot be named, that was ever offered as a teft of any of those religions before their effablishment †."

> \* Campbell on Miracles, p. 120; ed. 1736. † Adams on Mir. p. 75.

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We may add to what has been obferved, of the diffinction which we are confidering, that, where miracles are alledged merely in affirmance of a prior opinion, they who believe the doctrine may fometimes propagate a belief of the miracles which they do not themselves entertain. This is the case of what are called *pious* frauds; but it is a cafe, I apprehend, which takes place folely in support of a perfuasion already established. At least it does not hold of the apostolical hiftory. If the apoftles did not believe the miracles, they did not believe the religion; and, without this belief, where was the piety, what place was there for any thing which could bear the name or colour of piety, in publishing and attesting miracles in its behalf? If it be faid that many promote the belief of revelation, and of any accounts which favour that belief, because they think them, whether well or ill-founded, of public and political utility, I answer, that if a character exist, which can with less justice than another be afcribed to the founders of the Christian religion, it is that of politicians, or

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of men capable of entertaining political views. The truth is, that there is no affignable character which will account for the conduct of the apoftles, fuppofing their flory to be falfe. If bad men, what could have induced them to take fuch pains to promote virtue? If good men, they would not have gone about the country with a flring of lies in their mouths.

IN APPRECIATING the credit of any miraculous flory, thefe are diffinctions which relate to the evidence. There are other diffinctions, of great moment in the queftion, which relate to the miracles themfelves. Of which latter kind the following ought carefully to be retained.

I. It is not neceffary to admit as a miracle, what can be refolved into a *falle perception*. Of this nature was the demon of Socrates; the visions of St. Anthony, and of many others; the vision which Lord Herbert of Cherbury deferibes himfelf to have feen; Colonel Gardiner's vision, as related in his life, written by

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by Dr. Doddridge. All these may be accounted for by a momentary infanity; for the characteristic fymptom of human madnefs is the rifing up in the mind of images not diffinguishable by the patient from impreffions upon the fenfes \*. The cafes, however, in which the poffibility of this delufion exists, are divided from the cases in which it does not exift, by many, and those not obscure marks. They are, for the most part, cafes of visions or voices. The object is hardly ever touched. The vision fubmits not to be handled. One fense does not confirm another. They are likewife almost always cases of a *folitary* witness. It is in the highest degree improbable, and I know not, indeed, whether it hath ever been the fact, that the fame derangement of the mental organs should feize different perfons at the fame time; a derangement, E mean, so much the same, as to represent to their imagination the fame objects. Laftly, these are always cases of momentary miracles;

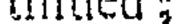
" Batty on Lunacy.

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by which term I mean to denote miracles, of which the whole existence is of short duration, in contradifinction to miracles which are attended with permanent effects. The appearance of a spectre, the hearing of a supernatural sound, is a momentary miracle. The fenfible proof is gone, when the apparition or found is over. But if a perfor born blind be reftored to fight, a notorious cripple to the use of his limbs, or a dead man to life, here is a permanent effect produced by fupernatural means. The change indeed was inflantaneous, but the proof continues. The fubject of the miracle remains. The man cured or reftored is there: his former condition was known, and his prefent condition may be examined. This can by no poffibility be refolved into falfe perception: and of this kind are by far the greater part of the miracles recorded in the New Teftament. When Lazarus was raifed from the dead, he did not merely move, and fpeak, and die again; or come out of the grave, and vanish away. He returned to his home and his family, and there con-Vol. I. A a tinued;





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tinued; for we find him, some time afterwards, in the fame town, fitting at table with - Jesus and his fifters; visited by great multitudes of the Jews, as a subject of curiofity; giving, by his prefence, fo much uneafinefs to the lewish rulers as to beget in them a design of destroying him \*. No delusion can account for this. The French prophets in England, fome time fince, gave out that one of their teachers would come to life again, but their enthuliafm never made them believe that they actually faw him alive. . The blind man, whose restoration to fight at Jerufalem is recorded in the ninth chapter of St. John's Gospel, did not quit the place, or conceal himfelf from enquiry. On the contrary, he was forthcoming, to answer the call, to fatisfy the ferutiny, and to fuftain the brow-beating of Chrift's angry and powerful enemies. When the cripple at the gate of the temple was fuddenly cured by Peter<sup>†</sup>, he did not immediately relapfe into his former lameness, or disappear out of the

\* John xii. 1, 2. 9, 10. + Acts iii. 2.

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city; but boldly and honeftly produced himfelf along with the apoftles, when they were brought the next day before the Jewifh council\*. Here, though the miracle was fudden, the proof was permanent. The lamenefs had been notorious, the cure continued. This, therefore, could not be the effect of any momentary delirium, either ' in the fubject or in the witneffes of the : transaction. It is the same with the greatest number of the scripture miracles. There are other cafes of a mixed nature, in which, although the principal miracle be momentary, fome circumstance combined with it is permanent. Of this kind is the hiftory of St. Paul's conversion †. The sudden light and found, the vision and the voice, upon the road to Damascus, were momentary: but Paul's blindness for three days in confequence of what had happened; the communication made to Ananias in another place, and by a vision independent of the former; Ananias finding out Paul in confe-

> \* Acts iv. 14. † Ib. ix. A a 2 · duence

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quence of intelligence fo received, and finding him in the condition defcribed, and Paul's recovery of his fight upon Ananias laying his hands upon him; are circumftances, which take the transaction, and the principal miracle as included in it, entirely out of the cafe of momentary miracles, or of fuch as may be accounted for by falle perceptions. Exactly the fame thing may be observed of Peter's vision preparatory to the call of Cornelius, and of its connection with what was imparted in a diftant place to Cornelius himfelf, and with the meffage difpatched by Cornelius to Peter. The vision might be a dream; the meffage could not. Either communication, taken separately, might be a delution; the concurrence of the two was impossible to happen without a supernatural cause.

Befide the rifk of delution which attaches upon momentary miracles, there is alfomuch more room for *impofture*. The account cannot be examined at the moment. And, when that is alfo a moment of hurry and confution.



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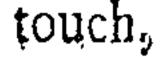
confusion, it may not be difficult for men of influence to gain credit to any ftory which they may with to have believed. This is precifely the cafe of one of the best attested of the miracles of Old Rome, the appearance of Caftor and Pollux in the battle fought by Posthumius with the Latins at the lake Regillus. There is no doubt but that Pofthumius, after the battle, fpread the report of fuch an appearance. No perfon could deny it, whilft it was faid to laft. No perfon, perhaps, had any inclination to difpute it afterwards; or, if they had, could fay with positiveness, what was, or what was not feen, by fome or other of the army, in the difmay and amidft the tumult of a battle.

In affigning falle perceptions as the origin to which fome miraculous accounts may be referred, I have not mentioned claims to infpiration, illuminations, fecret notices or directions, internal fenfations, or confeioufneffes of being acted upon by fpiritual influences, good or bad; becaufe thefe, appealing to no external proof, however convincing A a 3 they

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they may be to the perfons themselves, form no part of what can be accounted miraculous evidence. Their own credibility stands upon their alliance with other miracles. The difcuffion, therefore, of all fuch pretentions may be omitted.

II. It is not necessary to bring into the comparison what may be called tentative miracles; that is, where, out of a great number of trials, fome fucceed; and in the accounts of which, although the narrative of the fuccessful cases be alone preferved, and that of the unfuccefsful cafes funk, yet enough is flated to fhew that the cafes produced are only a few out of many in which the fame means have been employed. This observation bears, with confiderable force, upon the ancient oracles and auguries, in which a fingle coincidence of the event with the prediction is talked of and magnified, whilft failures are forgotten, or suppressed, or accounted for. It is also applicable to the cures wrought by relics, and at the tombs of faints. The boafted efficacy of the king's



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touch, upon which Mr. Hume lays fome strefs, falls under the same description. Nothing is alledged concerning it, which is not alledged of various nostrums, namely, out of many thousands who have used them, certified proofs of a few who have recovered. after them. No folution of this fort is applicable to the miracles of the gofpel. There is nothing in the narrative which can induce, or even allow, us to believe, that Chrift attempted cures in many inftances, and fucceeded in a few; or that he ever made the attempt in vain. He did not profess to heal every where all that were fick; on the contrary, he told the Jews, evidently meaning to represent his own cafe, that, " although many widows were in Ifrael in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and fix months, when great famine was throughout all the land, yet unto none of them was Elias fent, fave unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow:" and that " many lepers were in Ifrael in the time of Elifeus the prophet, and none of them was cleanfed faving Naaman the A a 4

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the Syrian<sup>\*\*</sup>. By which examples he gave them to understand, that it was not the nature of a divine interpolition, or neceffary to its purpole, to be general; fill lefs, to anfwer every challenge that might be made, which would teach men to put their faith upon these experiments. Chrift never pronounced the word but the effect followed +. It was not a thousand fick that received his benediction, and a few that were benefited; a fingle paralytic is let down in his bed at Jefus's feet, in the midft of a furrounding multitude; Jefus bid him walk, and he did

\* Luke iv. 25.

+ One, and only one, inflance may be produced in which the *difciples* of Chrift do feem to have attempted a cure, and not to have been able to perform it. The ftory is very ingenuoufly related by three of the evangelifts<sup>‡</sup>. The patient was afterwards healed by Chrift himfelf; and the whole transfaction feems to have been intended, as it was well fuited, to display the superiority of Chrift above all who performed miracles in his name; a distinction which, during his prefence in the world, it might be necessary to inculcate by fome such proof as this.

‡ Mark ix, 14. Mat. xyi. 20.

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fo \*\*. A man with a withered hand is in the fynagogue; Jefus bid him ftretch forth his hand, in the prefence of the affembly, and it was " reftored whole like the other †." There was nothing tentative in thefe cures; nothing that can be explained by the power of accident.

We may obferve alfo, that many of the cures which Chrift wrought, fuch as that of a perfon blind from his birth, alfo many miracles befide cures, as raifing the dead, walking upon the fea, feeding a great multitude with a few loaves and fifnes, are of a nature which does not in any wife admit of the fuppolition of a fortunate experiment.

III. We may difmifs from the queftion all accounts in which, allowing the phenomenon to be real, the fact to be true, it fiill remains *doubtful* whether a miracle were wrought. This is the cafe with the ancient hiftory of what is called the thundering

\* Mark ii. 3. 7 Mat. xii. 10.

legion,

legion, of the extraordinary circumstances which obstructed the rebuilding of the temple at Jerufalem by Julian, the circling of the flames and fragrant fmell at the martyrdom of Polycarp, the fudden fhower that extinguished the fire into which the scriptures were thrown in the Diocletian perfecution; Constantine's dream, his inferibing in confequence of it the crofs upon his standard and the shields of his soldiers; his victory, and the escape of the standard-bearer; perhaps also the imagined appearance of the cross in the heavens, though this last circumstance is very deficient in historical evidence. It is also the case with the modern annual exhibition of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples. It is a doubt likewise, which ought to be excluded by very special circumstances, from these narratives which relate to the supernatural cure of hypochondriacal and nervous complaints, and of all difeafes which are much affected by the imagination. The miracles of the fecond and third century are, ufually, healing the fick, and caffing out evil spiris, miracles

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miracles in which there is room for some error and deception. We hear nothing of causing the blind to fee, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the lepers to be cleanfed \*. Fhere are alfo inftances in Christian writers, of reputed miracles, which were natural operations, though not known to be fuch at the time, as that of articulate speech after the lofs of a great part of the tongue.

IV. To the fame head of objection nearly, may also be referred accounts, in which the variation of a small circumstance may have transformed fome extraordinary appearance, or some critical coincidence of events, into a miracle; ftories, in a word, which may be refolved into exaggeration. The miracles of the gofpel can by no poffibility be explained away in this manner. Total fiction will account for any thing; but no ftretch of exaggeration that has any parallel in other histories, no force of fancy upon real circumftances, could produce the narratives which we now have. The feeding of the

\* Jortin's Remarks, vol. ii. p. 51.

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five thouland with a few loaves and fifthes furpaffes all bounds of exaggeration. The raifing of Lazarus, of the widow's fon at Nain, as well as many of the cures which Chrift wrought, come not within the compafs of mifreprefentation. I mean, that it is impoffible to affign any polition of circumftances however peculiar, any accidental effects however extraordinary, any natural fingularity, which could fupply an origin or foundation to thefe accounts.

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Having thus enumerated feveral exceptions, which may juftly be taken to relations of miracles, it is neceffary, when we read the foriptures, to bear in our minds this general remark, that, although there be miracles recorded in the New Toftament, which fall within fome or other of the exceptions here affigned, yet that they are united with others, to which none of the fame exceptions extend, and that their credibility fands upon this union. Thus the vifions and revelations, which St. Paul afferts to have been imparted to him, may not, in their feparate 7 evidence,

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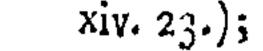
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evidence, be diffinguishable from the visions and revelations which many others have alledged. But here is the difference. St. Paul's pretentions were attefted by external miracles wrought by himfelf, and by miracles wrought in the caufe to which thefe vifions relate; or, to fpeak more properly, the fame hiftorical authority, which informs us of one, informs us of the other. This is not ordinarily true of the visions of enthulialls, or even of the accounts in which they are contained. Again, fome of Chrift's own miracles were momentary; as the transfiguration, the appearance and voice from Heaven at his baptifm, a voice from the clouds upon one occasion afterwards, (John xii. 30.) and fome others. It is not denied, that the diffinction which we have proposed concerning miracles of this species, applies, in diminution of the force of the evidence, as much to these instances as to others. But this is the cafe, not with all the miracles afcribed to Chrift, nor with the greatest part, nor with many. Whatever force therefore there may be in the objection,

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we have numerous miracles which are free from it; and even these to which it is applicable, are little affected by it in their credit, becaufe there are few, who, admitting the reft, will reject them. If there be miracles of the New Teftament, which come within any of the other heads into which we have diffributed the objections, the fame remark must be repeated. And this is one way, in which the unexampled number and variety of the miracles ascribed to Chrift, strengthens the credibility of Christianity. For it precludes any folution, or conjecture about a folution, which imagination, or even which experience might fuggest concerning some particular miracles, if confidered independently of others. The miracles of Chrift were of various kinds\*, and performed in great varieties of fituation, form and manner; at Jerusalem, the metropolis of the Jewifh

\* Not only healing every species of difease, but turning water into wine (John ii.); feeding multitudes with a few loaves and fishes (Mat. xiv. 14. Mark vi. 35. Luke ix. 12. John iv. 5.); walking on the sea (Mat.



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Jewish nation and religion; in different parts of Judea and Galilee; in cities and villages; in fynagogues, in private houses; in the street, in highways; with preparation, as in the case of Lazarus; by accident, as in the case of the widow's fon of Nain; when attended by multitudes, and when alone with the patient; in the midst of his disciples, and in the prefence of his enemies; with the common people around him, and before Scribes and Pharises, and rulers of the stragogues.

I apprehend that, when we remove from the comparison, the cases which are fairly disposed of by the observations that have been stated, many cases will not remain. To those which do remain, we apply this final distinction; "that there is not fatiffactory evidence, that persons, pretending to

xiv. 23.); calming a ftorm (Mat. viii. 26. Luke viii. 23.); a celeftial voice at his baptifm, and miraculous appearance (Mat. iii. 17. afterwards John xii. 28.); his tranffiguration (Mat. xvii. 1-8. Mark ix. 2. Luke ix. 28. 2 Ep. Peter i. 16, 17.); raifing the dead in three diftinct inftances (Mat. ix. 18. Mark v. 22. Luke viii. 41. Luke vii. 14. John xi.)

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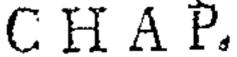
be original witneffes of the miracles, paffed their lives in labours, dangers and fufferings, voluntarily undertaken and undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and properly in confequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts."

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BUT they, with whom we argue, have undoubtedly a right to felect their own examples. The inftances with which Mr. Hume hath chosen to confront the miracles of the New Teftament, and which, therefore, we are entitled to regard as the ftrongest which the hiftory of the world could fupply to the enquiries of a very acute and learned adverfary, are the three following :

1. The cure of a blind and of a lame man at Alexandria, by the Emperor Vefpafian, as related by Tacitus;

2. The reftoration of the limb of an attendant in a Spanish church, as told by Cardinal de Retz; and

3. The cures faid to be performed at the Vol. I. Вb tomb

tomb of the Abbé Paris, in the early part of the prefent century.

1. The narrative of Tacitus is delivered in these terms: "One of the common people of Alexandria, known to be difeafed in his eyes, by the admonition of the god Serapis, whom that superstitious nation worship above all other gods, prostrated himself before the emperor, earnefly imploring from him a remedy for his blindnefs, and entreating that he would deign to anoint with his fpittle his checks and the balls of his eyes. Another, difeafed in his hand, requefted, by the admonition of the fame god, that he might be touched by the foot of the emperor. Vespasian at first derided and defpised their application; afterwards when they continued to urge their petitions, he fometimes appeared to dread the imputation of vanity; at other times, by the earnest fupplication of the patients, and the perfuafion of his flatterers, to be induced to hope for fuccefs. At length he commanded an enquiry to be made by the physicians, whether fuch 0

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fuch a blinduess and debility were vincible by human aid. The report of the physicians contained various points; that in the one the power of vision was not destroyed, but would return if the obstacles were removed; that, in the other, the difeafed joints might be reftored, if a healing power were applied; that it was, perhaps, agreeable to the gods to do this; that the emperor was elected by divine affiftance; laftly, that the credit of the fuccels would be the emperor's, the ridicule of the disappointment would fall upon the patients. Vespasian, believing that every thing was in the power of his fortune, and that nothing was any longer incredible, whilft the multitude, which flood by, eagerly expected the event, with a countenance expreffive of joy executed what he was defired to do. Immediately the hand was reftored to its use, and light returned to the blind man. They who were prefent, relate both these cures, even at this time, when there is nothing to be gained by lying\*."

\* Tac. Hift. lib. iv.

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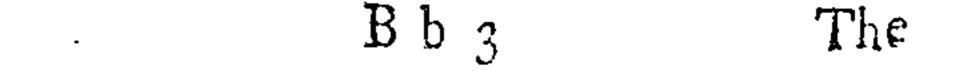
Now, though Tacitus wrote this account twenty-feven years after the miracle is faid to have been performed, and wrote at Rome of what paffed at Alexandria, and wrote alfo from report; and although it does not appear that he had examined the ftory, or that he believed it (but rather the contrary), yet I think his testimony fufficient to prove that fuch a transaction took place; by which I mean that the two men in question did apply to Vefpalian; that Vefpalian did touch the difeafed in the manner related; and that a cure was reported to have followed the operation. But the affair labours under a ftrong and just fuspicion, that the whole of it was a concerted imposture brought about by collution between the patients, the physician, and the emperor. This folution is probable, becaufe there was every thing to fuggest, and every thing to facilitate fuch a fcheme. The miracle was calculated to confer honour upon the emperor, and upon the god Serapis. It was achieved in the midft of the emperor's flatterers and followers; in a city, and amongft

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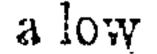
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a populace, beforehand devoted to his intereft, and to the worship of the god; where it would have been treason and blasphemy together to have contradicted the fame of the cure, or even to have questioned it. And what is very observable in the account is, that the report of the physicians is just fuch a report as would have been made of a cafe, in which no external marks of the difeafe exifted, and which, confequently, was capable of being eafily counterfeited, viz. that in the first of the patients the organs of vision were not destroyed, that the weaknels of the fecond was in his joints. The ftrongest circumstance in Tacitus's narration is, that the first patient was "notus tabe oculorum," remarked or notorious for the difeafe in his eyes. But this was a circumftance which might have found its way into the ftory in its progrefs from a diftant country, and during an interval of thirty years; or it might be true that the malady of the eyes was notorious, yet that the nature and degree of the difeafe had never been afcertained; a case by no means uncommon.



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'The emperor's referve was eafily aff fed; or it is poffible he might not be in the f cret. There does not feem to be much weight in the observation of Tacitus, that they who were prefent continued even then to relate the ftory when there was nothing to be gained by the lie. It only proves that those who had told the ftory for many years, perfifted in it. The flate of mind of the witneffes and spectators at the time, is the point to be attended to. Still lefs is there of pertinency in Mr. Hume's eulogium upon the cautious and penetrating genius of the hiftorian; for it does not appear that the hiftorian believed it. The terms in which he fpeaks of Serapis, the deity to whole interposition the miracle was attributed, scarcely fuffer us to suppose that Tacitus thought the miracle to be real, "by the admonition of the god Serapis, whom that fuperfitious nation (dedita superstitionibus gens) worship above all other gods." To have brought this supposed niracle within the limits of comparison with the miracles of Chrift, it ought to have appeared, that a perfon of



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a low and private flation, in the midfl of enemies, with the whole power of the country opposing him, with every one around him prejudiced or interested against his claims and character, pretended to perform these cures; and required the fpcctators, upon the ftrength of what they faw, to give up their firmest hopes and opinions, and follow *him* through a life of trial and danger; that many were fo moved, as to obey his call, at the expence, both of every notion in which. they had been brought up, and of their eafe, fafety and reputation; and that by thefe beginnings a change was produced in the world, the effects of which remain to this day; a cafe, both in its circumstances and confequences, very unlike any thing we find in Tacitus's relation.

2. The flory taken from the memoirs of Cardinal de Retz, which is the fecond example alledged by Mr. Hume, is this: " In the church of Saragoffa in Spain, the canons shewed me a man whose business it was to Bb4 light



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light the lamps, telling me that he had been feveral years at the gate with one leg only. I faw him with two \*.

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It is flated by Mr. Hume, that the Cardinal who relates this ftory, did not believe it; and it no where appears that he either examined the limb, or asked the patient, or indeed any one, a fingle queltion about the matter. An artificial leg wrought with art would be fufficient, in a place where no fuch contrivance had ever beføre been heard of, to give origin and currency to the report. The ecclessaftics of the place would, it is probable, favour the ftory, inafmuch as it advanced the honour of their image and church. And if they patronized it, no other perfon at Saragoffa, in the middle of the laft century, would care to difpute it. The ftory likewife coincided, not lefs with the wifnes and preconceptions of the people, than with the interests of their ecclesiastical rulers: so that there was prejudice backed \* Liv. iv. A. D. 1654.

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by authority, and both operating upon extreme ignorance, to account for the fuccefs of the impofture. If, as I have fuggefted, the contrivance of an artificial limb was then new, it would not occur to the Cardinal himfelf to fufpect it; efpecially under the careleffnefs of mind with which he heard the tale, and the little inclination he felt to forutinize or expofe its fallacy,

3. The miracles related to have been

wrought at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, admit in general of this folution. The patients who frequented the tomb were fo affected by their devotion, their expectation, the place, the folemnity, and, above all, by the fympathy of the furrounding multitude, that many of them were thrown into violent convultions, which convultions, in certain inftances, produced a removal of diforders depending upon obftruction. We fhall, at this day, have the lefs difficulty in admitting the above account, becaufe it is the very fame thing as hath lately been experienced in the operations of animal magnetifm; and



the report of the French phyficians upon that myfterious remedy is very applicable to the prefent confideration, viz. that the pretenders to the art, by working upon the imaginations of their patients, were frequently able to produce convulfions; that convulfions fo produced are amongft the moft powerful, but, at the fame time, moft uncertain and unmanageable applications to the human frame, which can be employed.

Circumftances, which indicate this explication in the cafe of the Parifian miracles, are the following :

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1. They were *lentalive*. Out of many thousand fick, infirm, and difeased persons, who reforted to the tomb, the professed history of the miracles contains only nine cures.

2. The convulsions at the tomb are ad-

3. The difeases were, for the most part, of

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of that fort which depends upon inaction and obstruction, as dropsies, palsies, and fome tumours.

4. The cures were gradual; fome patients attending many days, fome feveral weeks, and fome feveral months.

5. The cures were many of them incomplete.

6. Others were temporary\*.

So that all the wonder we are called upon to account for is, that out of an almost innumerable multitude which reforted to the tomb for the cure of their complaints, and many of whom were there agitated by strong convulsions, a very small proportion experienced a beneficial change in their constitution, especially in the action of the nerves and glands.

\* The reader will find these particulars verified in the detail, by the accurate enquiries of the present bishop of Sarum, in his Criterion of Miracles, p. 132 et seq.



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Some of the cafes alledged do not require that we fhould have recourse to this folution. The first case in the catalogue is scarcely diffinguishable from the progress of a natural recovery. It was that of a young man, who laboured under an inflammation of one eye, and had loft the fight of the other. The inflamed eye was relieved, but the blindnefs of the other remained. The inflammation had before been abated by medicine: and the young man, at the time of his attendance at the tomb, was using a lotion of laudanum. And, what is a still more material part of the cafe, the inflammation after fome interval returned. Another cafe was that of a young man who had loft his fight by the puncture of an awl, and the discharge of the aqueous humour through the wound. The fight, which had been gradually returning, was much improved during his visit to the tomb, that is, probably, in the fame degree in which the difcharged humour was replaced by fresh fecretions. And it is obfervable, that these two are the only cases, which, from their nature, should feem un-

#### likely to be affected by convultions.

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In one material respect I allow, that the Parifian miracles were different from those related by Tacitus, and from the Spanish miracle of the Cardinal de Retz. They had not, like them, all the power and all the prejudice of the country on their fide to begin with. They were alledged by one party against another, by the Jansenists against the Jesuits. These were of course opposed and examined by their adversaries. The confequence of which examination was, that many fallehoods were detected, that with fomething really extraordinary much fraud appeared to be mixed. And if fome of the cafes upon which defigned milreprefentation could not be charged, were not at the time fatisfactorily accounted for, it was because the efficacy of strong spafmodic affections was not then fufficiently known. Finally, the caufe of Jansenism did not rife by the miracles, but funk, al-, though the miracles had the anterior perfuafion of all the numerous adherents of that. caule to fet out with,

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These, let us remember, are the strongest examples, which the hiftory of ages supplies. In none of them was the miracle unequivocal; by none of them were established prejudices and perluafions overthrown; of none of them did the credit make its way, in opposition to authority and power; by none of them were many induced to commit themfelves, and that in contradiction to prior opinions, to a life of mortification, danger and fufferings; none were called

upon to attell them, at the expense of their fortunes and fafety\*.

\* It may be thought that the hiftorian of the Parifian miracles, M. Montgeron, forms an exception to this laft affertion. He presented his book (with a suspicion, as it should feem, of the danger of what he was doing) to the king; and was fhortly afterwards committed to prifon, from which he never came out. Had the miracles been unequivocal, and had M. Montgeron been originally convinced by them, I fhould have allowed this exception. It would have flood, I think, alone, in the argument of our adverfaries. But befide what has been observed of the dubious nature of the miracles, the account which M. Montgeron has himfelf left of his conversion, shews both the state of his mind, and that his perfuasion was not built upon external miracles.

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's' Scarcely had he entered the church-yard, when he was struck," he tells us, " with awe and reverence, having never before heard prayers pronounced with fo much ardour and transport as he observed amongst the fupplicants at the tomb. Upon this, throwing himself on his knees, resting his elbows on the tombftone, and covering his face with his hands, he fpake the following prayer : O thow, by whose intercession fo many miracles are faid to be performed, if it be true that a part of thee furviveth the grave, and that thou haft influence with the Almighty, have pity on the darkness of my understanding, . and through his mercy obtain the removal of it." Having prayed thus, " many thoughts," as he fayeth, " began to open themselves to his mind; and so profound was his attention that he continued on his knees four hours, not in the least disturbed by the vast crowd of furrounding fupplicants. During this time all the arguments which he had ever heard or read in favour of Christianity, occurred to him with fo much force, and feemed fo ftrong and convincing, that he went home fully fatiffied of the truth of religion in general, and of the holinefs and power of that perfon, who," as he fuppofed, " had engaged the divine goodnefs to enlighten his understanding fo suddenly." Douglafs, Crit. of Mir. p. 214.

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