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it in season or out of season, 2 Tim. iv. 1. He that has the happy talent of *Parlour Preaching*, has sometimes done more for Christ and souls in the space of a few minutes, than by the labour of many days, in the usual course of preaching in the pulpit. Our character should be all of a piece, and we should help forward the success of our public ministrations by our private addresses to the hearts of men, where Providence favours us with just occasions.

In order to promote this work of particular watchfulness over the flock of Christ, where he has made you a shepherd and overseer, it is useful to keep a catalogue of their names, and now and then review them with a pastoral eye and affection. This will awaken and incline you to lift up proper petitions for each of them, so far as you are acquainted with their circumstances in body or mind. This will excite you to give thanks to God on account of those who walk as becomes the Gospel, and who have either begun, or proceeded and increased in the christian life and temper by your ministry: You will observe the names of the negligent and backsliding Christians, to mourn over them and admonish them: You will be put in mind how to dispose of your time in christian visits, and learn the better to fulfil your whole ministry among them.

We shall enlarge no farther in the enumeration of our duties, which would easily swell into a volume, if they were set before our eyes in their full extent: But in general, we say, these are the methods whereby we must "take heed to ourselves, if we would fulfil the ministry that we have received of Christ." To supply what is omitted, read frequently, and with holy attention, the Epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, which will furnish you richly with directions for your work.

[*To be concluded in the next.*]

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L E T T E R VII.

FROM THE BISHOP OF LANDAFF TO THOMAS PAINE.

[ *Continued from page 285.* ]

"THE New Testament, they tell us, is founded upon the prophecies of the Old; if so, it must follow the fate of it's foundation."—Thus you open your attack upon the New Testament; and I agree with you, that the New Testament must follow the fate of the Old; and that fate is to remain unimpaired by such efforts as you have made against it. The New Testament, however, is not founded solely on the prophecies of the Old. If a heathen from Athens or Rome, who had never heard of the prophecies

prophecies of the Old Testament, had been an eye-witness of the miracles of Jesus, he would have made the same conclusion that the Jew Nicodemus did—"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."—Our Saviour tells the Jews,—"Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me:"—and he bids them search the Scriptures, for they testified of him:—But, notwithstanding this appeal to the prophecies of the Old Testament, Jesus said to the Jews, "Though ye believe not me, believe the works."—Believe me for the very works' sake."—"If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin."—These are sufficient proofs that the truth of Christ's mission was not even to the Jews, much less to the Gentiles, founded solely on the truth of the prophecies of the Old Testament. So that if you could prove some of these prophecies to have been misapplied, and not completed in the person of Jesus, the truth of the Christian religion would not thereby be overturned.—That Jesus of Nazareth was the person, in whom all the prophecies, direct and typical, in the Old Testament, respecting the Messiah, were fulfilled, is a proposition founded on those prophecies, and to be proved by comparing them with the history of his life. That Jesus was *a* prophet sent from God, is one proposition—that Jesus was *the* prophet, the Messiah, is another: and though he certainly was both *a* prophet and *the* prophet, yet the foundations of the proof of these propositions are separate and distinct.

The "mere existence of such a woman as Mary, and of such a man as Joseph, and Jesus, is," you say, "a matter of indifference, about which there is no ground either to believe or to disbelieve."—Belief is different from knowledge, with which you here seem to confound it. We know that the whole is greater than its part—and we know that all the angles in the same segment of a circle are equal to each other—we have intuition and demonstration as grounds of this knowledge; but is there no ground for belief of past or future existence? Is there no ground for believing that the sun will exist to-morrow, and that your father existed before you? You condescend, however to think it probable, that there were such persons as Mary, Joseph, and Jesus; and, without troubling yourself about their existence or non-existence, assuming, as it were, for the sake of argument, but without positively granting, their existence, you proceed to inform us, "that it is the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon," against which you contend. You will not repute it a fable, that there was such a man as Jesus Christ; that he lived in Judea near eighteen hundred years ago; that he went about doing good, and preaching, not only in the villages of Galilee, but in the city of Jerusalem; that he had several followers who constantly attended him; that he was put to death by Pontius Pilate; that his disciples were numerous a few years after his death, not only in Judea, but in Rome the capital of the world, and in every province of the Roman empire; that a particular day has been observed in a religious manner by all his followers, in commemoration of a real or supposed resurrection; and that the constant celebration of baptism, and of the Lord's supper, may be traced back from the present time to him,

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as the author of those institutions. These things constitute, I suppose, no part of your fable; and if these things be facts, they will, when maturely considered, draw after them to many other things related in the New Testament concerning Jesus, that there will be left for your fable but very scanty materials, which will require great fertility of invention before you will dress them up in any form which will not disgust even a superficial observer.

The miraculous conception you esteem a fable, and in your mind it is an obscene fable.—Impure indeed must that man's imagination be, who can discover any obscenity in the angel's declaration to Mary:—"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—I wonder you do not find obscenity in Genesis, where it is said, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and brought order out of confusion, a world out of a chaos, by his fostering influence. As to the christian faith being built upon the heathen mythology, there is no ground whatever for the assertion; there would have been some for saying, that much of the heathen mythology was built upon the events recorded in the Old Testament.

You come now to a demonstration, or, which amounts to the same thing, to a proposition which cannot, you say, be controverted:—first, "That the *agreement* of all the parts of a story does not prove that story to be true, because the parts may agree and the whole may be false;—secondly, that the *disagreement* of the parts of a story proves that the *whole cannot be true*. The agreement does not prove truth, but the disagreement proves falsehood positively." Great use, I perceive, is to be made of this proposition. You will pardon my unskilfulness in dialectics, if I presume to controvert the truth of this abstract proposition, as applied to any purpose in life. The agreement of the parts of a story implies that the story has been told by, at least, two persons (the life of Dr. Johnson, for instance, by Sir John Hawkins and Mr. Boswell). Now I think it scarcely possible for even two persons, and the difficulty is increased if there are more than two, to write the history of the life of any one of their acquaintance, without there being a considerable difference between them, with respect to the number and order of the incidents of his life. Some things will be omitted by one, and mentioned by the other; some things will be briefly touched by one, and the same things will be circumstantially detailed by the other; the same things, which are mentioned in the same way by them both, may not be mentioned as having happened exactly at the same point of time, with other possible and probable differences. But these real or apparent difficulties, in minute circumstances, will not invalidate their testimony as to the material transactions of his life, much less will they render the whole of it a fable. If several independent witnesses, of fair character, should agree in all the parts of a story, (in testifying, for instance, that a murder or a robbery was committed at a particular time, in a particular place, and by a certain individual,) every court of justice in the world would admit the fact, notwithstanding

notwithstanding the abstract possibility of the whole being false:— again, if several honest men should agree in saying, that they saw the king of France beheaded, though they should disagree as to the figure of the guillotine, or the size of his executioner, as to the king's hands being bound or loose, as to his being composed or agitated in ascending the scaffold, yet every court of justice in the world would think, that such difference, respecting the circumstances of the fact, did not invalidate the evidence respecting the fact itself. When you speak of the whole of a story, you cannot mean every particular circumstance connected with the story, but not essential to it; you must mean the pith and marrow of the story; for it would be impossible to establish the truth of any fact, (of admirals Byng or Keppel, for example, having neglected or not neglected their duty,) if a disagreement in the evidence of witnesses, in minute points, should be considered as annihilating the weight of their evidence in points of importance. In a word, the relation of a fact differs essentially from the demonstration of a theorem. If one step is left out, one link in the chain of ideas constituting a demonstration is omitted, the conclusion will be destroyed; but a fact may be established, notwithstanding a disagreement of the witnesses in certain trifling particulars of their evidence respecting it.

You apply your incontrovertible proposition to the genealogies of Christ given by Matthew and Luke—there is a disagreement between them; therefore, you say, “If Matthew speak truth, Luke speaks falsehood; and if Luke speak truth, Matthew speaks falsehood; and hence there is no authority for believing either; and if they cannot be believed even in the very first thing they say and set out to prove, they are not entitled to be believed in any thing they say afterwards.” I cannot admit either your premises or your conclusion—not your conclusion; because two authors, who differ in tracing back the pedigree of an individual for above a thousand years, cannot, on that account, be esteemed incompetent to bear testimony to the transactions of his life, unless an intention to falsify could be proved against them. If two Welsh historians should at this time write the life of any remarkable man of their country, who had been dead twenty or thirty years, and should through different branches of their genealogical tree, carry up the pedigree to *Cadwallon*, would they, on account of that difference, be discredited in every thing they said? Might it not be believed that they gave the pedigree as they had found it recorded in different instruments, but without the least intention to write a falsehood?—I cannot admit your premises; because Matthew speaks truth, and Luke speaks truth, though they do not speak the same truth; Matthew giving the genealogy of Joseph the reputed father of Jesus, and Luke giving the genealogy of Mary the real mother of Jesus. If you will not admit this, other explanations of the difficulty might be given; but I hold it sufficient to say, that the authors had no design to deceive the reader, that they took their accounts from the public registers, which were carefully kept, and that had they been fabricators of these genealogies, they would have been exposed at the time to instant detection; and the certainty of that detection would have prevented them from making the attempt to impose a false genealogy on the Jewish nation.

But that you may effectually overthrow the credit of these genealogies, you make the following calculation:—"From the birth of David to the birth of Christ is upwards of 1080 years; and as there were but 27 full generations, to find the average of each person mentioned in St. Matthew's list at the time his first son was born, it is only necessary to divide 1080 by 27, which gives 40 years for each person. As the life-time of man was then but of the same extent it is now, it is an absurdity to suppose, that 27 generations should all be old bachelors, before they married. So far from this genealogy being a solemn truth, it is not even a reasonable lie."—This argument assumes the appearance of arithmetical accuracy, and the conclusion is in a style which even its truth would not excuse:—yet the argument is good for nothing, and the conclusion is not true. You have read the Bible with some attention; and you are extremely liberal in imputing to it lies and absurdities; read it over again, especially the books of the Chronicles, and you will there find, that, in the genealogical list of St. Matthew, three generations are omitted between Joram and Ozias; Joram was the father of Azariah, Azariah of Joash, Joash of Amaziah, and Amaziah of Ozias.—I enquire not, in this place, whence this omission proceeded; whether it is to be attributed to an error in the genealogical tables from whence Matthew took his account, or to a corruption of the text of the evangelist; still it is an omission. Now if you will add these three generations to the 27 you mention, and divide 1080 by 30, you will find the average age when these jews had each of them their first son born was 36. They married sooner than they ought to have done, according to Aristotle, who fixes thirty-seven as the most proper age, when a man should marry. Nor was it necessary that they should have been old bachelors, though each of them had not a son to succeed him, till he was thirty-six; they might have been married at twenty, without having a son till they were forty. You assume in your argument, that the first born son succeeded the father in the list—this is not true, Solomon succeeded David; yet David had at least six sons, who were grown to manhood before Solomon was born; and Rehoboam had at least three sons before he had Abia (Abijah) who succeeded him.—It is needless to cite more instances to this purpose; but from these, and other circumstances which might be insisted upon, I can see no ground for believing, that the genealogy of Jesus Christ, mentioned by St. Matthew, is not a solemn truth.

You insist much upon some things being mentioned by one evangelist, which are not mentioned by all or by any of the others; and you take this to be a reason why we should consider the gospels, not as the works of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but as the productions of some *unconnected* individuals, each of whom made his own legend. I do not admit the truth of this supposition; but I may be allowed to use it as an argument against yourself—it removes every possible suspicion of fraud and imposture, and confirms the gospel history in the strongest manner. Four *unconnected* individuals have each written memoirs of the life of Jesus; from whatever source they derived their materials, it is evident that they agree in a great many particulars of the last importance; such as the purity of his manners; the sanctity of his doctrines; the multitude and publicity of his miracles; the persecuting spirit

spirit of his enemies; the manner of his death; and the certainty of his resurrection; and whilst they agree in these great points, their disagreement in points of little consequence, is rather a confirmation of the truth, than an indication of the falsehood, of their several accounts. — Had they agreed in nothing, their testimony ought to have been rejected as a legendary tale; had they agreed in every thing, it might have been suspected that, instead of unconnected individuals, they were a set of impostors. The manner, in which the evangelists have recorded the particulars of the life of Jesus, is wholly conformable to what we experience in other biographers, and claims our highest assent to it's truth, notwithstanding the force of your incontrovertible proposition.

As an instance of contradiction between the evangelists, you tell us, that Matthew says, the angel announcing the immaculate conception appeared unto Joseph; but Luke says, he appeared unto Mary. — The angel, sir, appeared to them both; to Mary, when he informed her that she should, by the power of God, conceive a son; to Joseph, some months afterwards, when Mary's pregnancy was visible; in the interim she had paid a visit of three months to her cousin Elizabeth. It might have been expected, that, from the accuracy with which you have read your Bible, you could not have confounded these obviously-distinct appearances; but men, even of candour, are liable to mistakes. Who, you ask, would now believe a girl, who should say she was gotten with child by a ghost? — Who, but yourself, would ever have asked a question so abominably indecent and profane? I cannot argue with you on this subject. You will never persuade the world, that the Holy Spirit of God has any resemblance to the stage ghosts in Hamlet or Macbeth, from which you seem to have derived your idea of it.

The story of the massacre of the young children by the order of Herod, is mentioned only by Matthew; and therefore you think it is a lie. We must give up all history if we refuse to admit facts recorded by only one historian. Matthew addressed his gospel to the jews, and put them in mind of a circumstance, of which they must have had a melancholy remembrance; but gentile converts were less interested in that event. The evangelists were not writing the life of Herod, but of Jesus; it is no wonder that they omitted, above half a century after the death of Herod, an instance of his cruelty, which was not essentially connected with their subject. The massacre, however, was probably known even at Rome; and it was certainly correspondent to the character of Herod. John, you say, at the time of the massacre, "was under two years of age, and yet he escaped; so that the story circumstantially belies itself." — John was six months older than Jesus; and you cannot prove that he was not beyond the age to which the order of Herod extended; it probably reached no farther than to those who had completed their first year, without including those who had entered upon their second: but without insisting upon this, still I contend that you cannot prove John to have been under two years of age at the time of the massacre; and I could give many probable reasons to the contrary. Nor is it certain that John was, at that time, in that part of the country to which the edict of Herod extended. But there would be no end of answering, at length, all your little objections.

No two of the evangelists, you observe, agree in reciting, *exactly in the same words*, the written inscription which was put over Christ when he was crucified. — I admit that there is an unessential verbal difference; and are you certain that there was not a verbal difference in the inscriptions themselves? — One was written in Hebrew, another in Greek, another in Latin; and, though they had all the same meaning, yet it is probable, that if two men had translated the Hebrew and the Latin into Greek, there would have been a verbal difference between their translations. You have rendered yourself famous by writing a book called — *The Rights of Man*: — had you been guillotined by Robespierre, with this title, written in French, English, and German, and affixed to the guillotine — Thomas Paine, of America, author of *The Rights of Man* — and had four persons, some of whom had seen the execution, and the rest had heard of it from eye-witnesses, written short accounts of your life twenty years or more after your death, and one had said the inscription was — This is Thomas Paine, the author of *The Rights of Man* — another, The author of *The Rights of Man* — a third, This is the author of *The Rights of Man* — and a fourth, Thomas Paine, of America, the author of *The Rights of Man* — would any man of common sense have doubted, on account of this disagreement, the veracity of the authors in writing your life? — “The only one,” you tell us, “of the men called apostles, who appears to have been near the spot where Jesus was crucified, was Peter.” — This your assertion is not true — we do not know that Peter was present at the crucifixion; but we do know that John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was present; for Jesus spoke to him from the cross. — You go on, “But why should we believe Peter, convicted by their own account of perjury, in swearing that he knew not Jesus?” I will tell you why — because Peter sincerely repented of the wickedness into which he had been betrayed, through fear for his life, and suffered martyrdom in attestation of the truth of the christian religion.

But the evangelists disagree, you say, not only as to the superscription on the cross, but as to the time of the crucifixion, “Mark saying it was at the third hour (nine in the morning), and John at the sixth hour (twelve, as you suppose, at noon).” Various solutions have been given of this difficulty, none of which satisfied Doctor Middleton, much less can it be expected that any of them should satisfy you; but there is a solution not noticed by him, in which many judicious men have acquiesced — That John, writing his gospel in Asia, used the Roman method of computing time; which was the same as our own; so that by the sixth hour, when Jesus was *condemned*, we are to understand six o'clock in the morning; the intermediate time from six to nine, when he was crucified, being employed in preparing for the crucifixion. But if this difficulty should be still esteemed insuperable, it does not follow that it will always remain so; and if it should, the main point, the crucifixion of Jesus, will not be affected thereby.

I cannot, in this place, omit remarking some circumstances attending the crucifixion, which are so natural, that we might have wondered if they had not occurred. Of all the disciples of Jesus, John was beloved by him with a peculiar degree of affection; and, as kindness produces kindness, there can be little doubt that the regard was reciprocal.

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Now whom should we expect to be the attendants of Jesus in his last suffering? Whom but John, the friend of his heart? — Whom but his mother, whose soul was now pierced through by the sword of sorrow, which *Simeon* had foretold? — Whom but those, who had been attached to him through life; who, having been healed by him of their infirmities, were impelled by gratitude to minister to him of their substance, to be attentive to all his wants? — These were the persons whom we should have expected to attend his execution; and these were there. To whom would an expiring son, of the best affections, recommend a poor, and, probably, a widowed mother, but to his warmest friend? — And this did Jesus. — Unmindful of the extremity of his own torture, and anxious to alleviate the burden of her sorrows, and to protect her old age from future want and misery, he said to his beloved disciple — “Behold thy mother! and from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.” I own to you, that such instances as these, of the conformity of events to our probable expectation, are to me genuine marks of the simplicity and truth of the gospels; and far outweigh a thousand little objections, arising from our ignorance of manners, times, and circumstances, or from our incapacity to comprehend the means used by the Supreme Being in the moral government of his creatures.

St. Matthew mentions several miracles which attended our Saviour's crucifixion — the darkness which overspread the land — the rending of the veil of the temple — an earthquake which rent the rocks — and the resurrection of many saints, and their going into the holy city. — “Such,” you say, “is the account which this dashing writer of the book of Matthew gives, but in which he is not supported by the writers of the other books.” This is not accurately expressed; Matthew is supported by Mark and Luke, with respect to two of the miracles — the darkness — and the rending of the veil: — and their omission of the other does not prove, that they were either ignorant of them, or disbelieved them. I think it idle to pretend to say positively what influenced them to mention only two miracles; they probably thought them sufficient to convince any person, as they convinced the centurion that Jesus “was a righteous man” — “the Son of God.” And these two miracles were better calculated to produce general conviction, amongst the persons for whose benefit Mark and Luke wrote their gospels, than either the earthquake or the resurrection of the saints. The earthquake was, probably, confined to a particular spot, and might, by an objecter, have been called a natural phenomenon; and those to whom the saints appeared might, at the time of writing the gospels of Mark and Luke, have been dead: but the darkness must have been generally known and remembered; and the veil of the temple might still be preserved at the time these authors wrote — As to John not mentioning any of these miracles — it is well known that his gospel was written as a kind of supplement to the other gospels; he has therefore omitted many things which the other three evangelists has related, and he has added several which they had not mentioned; in particular, he has added a circumstance of great importance; he tells us that he saw one of the soldiers pierce the side of Jesus with a spear, and that blood and water flowed through the wound; and lest any one should doubt of the fact,



fact, from it's not being mentioned by the other evangelists, he asserts it with peculiar earnestness — "And he that saw it, bare record; and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." — John saw blood and water flowing from the wound; the blood is easily accounted for; but whence came the water? The anatomists tell us — that it came from the *pericardium*: — so consistent is evangelical testimony with the most curious researches into natural science! — You amuse yourself with the account of what the scripture calls *many* faints, and you call an *army* of faints, and are angry with Matthew for not having told you a great many things about them. — It is very possible that Matthew might have known the fact of their resurrection, without knowing every thing about them; but if he had gratified your curiosity in every particular, I am of opinion that you would not have believed a word of what he had told you. I have no curiosity on the subject; it is enough for me to know that "Christ was the first fruits of them that slept, and that all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth," as those holy men did, who heard the voice of the Son of God at his resurrection, and passed from death to life. If I durst indulge myself in being wise above what is written, I might be able to answer many of your inquiries relative to these faints: but I dare not touch the ark of the Lord, I dare not support the authority of scripture by the boldness of conjecture. Whatever difficulty there may be in accounting for the silence of the other evangelists, and of St. Paul also, on this subject, yet there is a greater difficulty in supposing that Matthew did not give a true narration of what had happened at the crucifixion. If there had been no supernatural darkness, no earthquake, no rending of the veil of the temple, no graves opened, no resurrection of holy men, no appearance of them unto many—if none of these things had been true, or rather if any one of them had been false, what motive could Matthew, writing to the jews, have had for trumping up such wonderful stories? He wrote, as every man does, with an intention to be believed; and yet every jew he met would have stared him in the face, and told him that he was a liar and an impostor. What author, who twenty years hence should address to the French nation an history of Louis XVI, would venture to affirm, that when he was beheaded there was darkness for three hours over all France? that there was an earthquake? that rocks were split? graves opened? and dead men brought to life, who appeared to many persons in Paris? — It is quite impossible to suppose, that any one would dare to publish such obvious lies; and I think it equally impossible to suppose, that Matthew would have dared to publish his account of what happened at the death of Jesus, had not that account been generally known to be true.

[ To be continued in our next. ]