

THE  
**FOUR GOSPELS,**

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK.

WITH  
**PRELIMINARY DISSERTATIONS,**

AND  
NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

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WITH THE AUTHOR'S LAST CORRECTIONS.

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**PREFACE**

TO

**MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.**

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**T**HE time when this Gospel was composed, has not been precisely ascertained by the learned. Some have thought that it was written no more than eight years after our Lord's ascension; others have reckoned it no fewer than fifteen. All antiquity seems agreed in the opinion, that it was of all the Gospels the first published; and, in a case of this kind, I should not think it prudent, unless for very strong reasons, to dissent from their verdict. Of the few Christian writers of the first century, whose works yet remain, there are in Barnabas, the companion of Paul, (if what is called the Epistle of Barnabas, which is certainly very ancient, be truly his) in Clement of Rome, and Hermas, clear references to some passages of this history. For though the Evangelist is not named, and his words are not formally quoted, the attentive reader must be sensible that the author had read the Gospel which has uni-

formly been ascribed to Matthew, and that, on some occasions, he plainly alludes to it. Very early in the second century, Ignatius, in those Epistles which are generally acknowledged to be genuine, and Polycarp, of whom we have no more but a single letter remaining, have manifest allusions to different parts of this Gospel. The writers above named are those who are denominated apostolic fathers, because they were contemporary to the Apostles, and had been their disciples. Their testimony, therefore, serves to show not only their knowledge of this book, but the great and general estimation wherein it was held from the beginning.

§ 2. THE first, indeed, upon record, who has named Matthew as the writer of this Gospel, is Papias bishop of Hierapolis in Cesarea, who is said to have been a companion of Polycarp, and hearer of John. Though Irenæus seems to think it was the Apostle John he meant, Eusebius, with greater probability, supposes it was a John who was commonly distinguished from the Apostle by the appellation of *the elder*, or *the presbyter*. Papias, in his preface, does not say that he had heard or seen any of the Apostles, but only that he had received every thing concerning the faith from those who were well acquainted with them. Besides, after naming the Apostle John, he mentions Aristion and John the elder, not as apostles, but as disciples, of the Lord. Concerning Matthew, this venerable ancient affirms that *he wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew tongue, which*

*every one interpreted as he was able*<sup>1</sup>. Here we have his testimony, first, that Matthew, (who is also called Levi<sup>2</sup>) was the writer of this Gospel, for no other was ever ascribed to him, and this was never ascribed to another; and, secondly, that it was written in Hebrew.

§ 3. THE first of these testimonies has never, as far as I know, been controverted. On the contrary, it has been confirmed, and still supported by all subsequent Christian authors who have touched the subject. The second of these testimonies, that this Evangelist wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, had a concurrence equally uniform of all succeeding writers in the church for about fourteen hundred years. In the last two centuries, however, this point has been hotly disputed. Erasmus, who, though an eminent scholar, knew little or nothing of Hebrew, was among the first who called in question a tradition which had so long, and so universally, obtained in the Church. “The faults of Erasmus,” says Simon<sup>3</sup>, “were blindly followed by cardinal Cajetan, “who, not knowing either Greek or Hebrew, was “incapable of correcting them.” The cardinal has since been almost deserted by the Catholics; and the principal defenders of this new opinion have

<sup>1</sup> Ματθαῖος μὲν ἐν Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλεκτῷ τὰ λόγια συνετάξατο· ἡρμηνεύσε δ' αὐτὰ ὡς ᾔδυνάτο ἕκαστος. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. cap. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Mark, ii. 14. Luke, v. 27. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. Crit. du Texte du N. T. c. 5.

been Protestants. It is very unlucky for the discovery of truth, when party-spirit, in any degree, influences our inquiries. Yet, it is but too evident that there has been an infusion of this spirit, in the discussion of the present question. ‘If we give up,’ says the staunch polemic, ‘the originality of the ‘Greek text, we have no Gospel by Matthew which ‘can be called authentic; for, to admit that the ‘translation of one book of Scripture may be so de- ‘nominated, is equally absurd as to admit it of them ‘all; and, if we admit this point, what becomes of ‘our controversy with the Romanists about the de- ‘cree of the council of Trent, asserting the authen- ‘ticity of the Vulgate?’ Whitby, who enters warmly into this dispute, urges<sup>4</sup>, amongst other things, the improbability that Providence, which has preserved all the other canonical books in their original languages, should have suffered the original of this Gospel to be so soon lost, and nothing of it to remain in the church but a translation. That all the books are extant which have been written by divine inspiration, is not so clear a case as that author seems to imagine. It will hardly be pretended that it is self-evident, and I have yet seen no attempt to prove it. The book of the wars of the Lord<sup>5</sup>, the book of Jasher<sup>6</sup>, the book of Nathan the Prophet, the book of Gad the Seer<sup>7</sup>, and several others, are

<sup>4</sup> Prefatory Disc. to the Four Gospels.      <sup>5</sup> Numb. xxi. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Jos. x. 13.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Chron. xxix. 29.

referred to in the Old Testament, manifestly as of equal authority with the book which refers to them, and as fuller in point of information. Yet these are, to all appearance, irrecoverably lost. Other Epistles, beside those we have, there is reason to think the Apostles wrote by the same Spirit. Paul, in what is called his first Epistle to the Corinthians<sup>8</sup>, plainly refers to what he had written to them, in a former epistle now not extant. The artificial methods which have been adopted, for eluding the manifest sense of his words, serve only to demonstrate, how unfriendly the spirit of the controvertist is to the discernment of the critic. And, if we regard the authority of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John, Paul wrote more epistles than one to the Philippians, as this venerable father expressly tells us, in his letter to that church<sup>9</sup>. Further, is not what is spoken, equally valuable with what is written, by inspiration? Yet how small a portion of the words of Him *who spake as never man spake*, has it pleased Providence to cause to be committed to writing? How little, comparatively, is recorded of the discourses of these poor fishermen of Galilee, whose eloquence, in spite of all its disadvantages, baffled the wisdom of the learned, the power of the mighty, and the influence of the rich, converting infidels and idolaters, by thousands, to a doctrine to which all their education, prejudices, and passions, rendered them most reluctant, the doctrine of the

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. v. 9.<sup>9</sup> ch. iii.

crucified Messiah? God bestows his favours, both spiritual and temporal, in various measures, to different individuals, nations, and ages, of the world, as he thinks fit. Those of former times enjoyed many advantages which we have not, and we enjoy some which they had not. It is enough for us, that this only is required as our duty, that we make the proper use of the Scriptures, and of all the other advantages which, through the goodness of God, we enjoy: for every man is *accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not*<sup>10</sup>.

But, indeed, this mode of arguing with regard to Providence, appears to me quite unsatisfactory, as proceeding on the notion that we are judges in matters which, in my opinion, are utterly beyond the reach of our faculties. Men imagining themselves to know perfectly what it is proper for the Ruler of the universe, in any supposed circumstance, to do, conclude boldly, that he has done this or that, after such a particular manner, or such another: a method which, in a creature like man, can hardly be accounted either modest, or pious. From the motives by which men are commonly influenced, we may judge, with some likelihood, what, in particular circumstances, their conduct will be. This is level to our capacity, and within the sphere of our experience. But let us not presume to measure the acts of Omnipotence, and of Infinite Wisdom, by our contracted span. Were we, from

<sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 12.

our notions of convenience, to determine what God, in possible cases, real or hypothetical, has done, or would do, we should, without hesitation, pronounce that the autographies, the identical writings of the sacred penmen (which are, in strictness, the only originals or perfect standards), would have been preserved from accidents, that they might serve for correcting all the corruptions which should, in process of time, through the mistakes, the carelessness, or the bad intention, of transcribers, be introduced. For who can deny that the sense of a writing may be as much injured by the blunders of a copyist, as by those of a translator? But if those have not the Gospel, who cannot have recourse to some copy in the original language, not the ten thousandth part of those called Christians, have yet partaken in that inestimable blessing. For how small, comparatively, is the number of those who can read the sacred writers in their own languages? If, therefore, it is truth we desire, and not the confirmation of our prejudices, let us renounce all such delusive reasonings *a priori* from supposed fitnesses, of which we are far, very far indeed, from being competent judges; and let us satisfy ourselves with examining, impartially, the evidences of the fact.

§ 4. THE proper evidence of ancient facts is written testimony. And for this fact, as was observed before, we have the testimony of Papias, as Eusebius, who quotes his words, assures us. For a fact of this kind, a more proper witness than Papias



could hardly be desired: if not a contemporary of the Apostles, or rather, if not known to them, a contemporary of their disciples, and who had been a hearer of two men, Aristion, and John the elder, whom he calls disciples of the Lord. He was one, therefore, who had it in his power to be certified of any fact relating to the ministry of the Apostles, and that by persons who had been intimately acquainted with them. Now, by the character transmitted to us of Papias, he was particularly inquisitive about the sayings and actions of our Lord; and, for this purpose, cultivated an acquaintance with those who had seen and heard him, and could give him the fullest information of all that he did and taught. "I took no delight," says he, "as most people do, "in those who talk much, but in those who teach "the truth; nor in those who relate strange pre- "cepts, but in those who relate the precepts which "the Lord hath entrusted us with, and which pro- "ceed from the truth itself." It would not be easy for me to imagine what could be objected to so clear an evidence, in so plain a case, a matter of fact which falls within the reach, even of the lowest understanding; for this is one of those points, on which, if the simplest man alive should deviate from truth, every man of sense would impute his deviation to a defect of a very different kind from that of understanding. Yet this is the only resource to which those who controvert the testimony of Papias, have betaken themselves.

§ 5. EUSEBIUS had said of Papias<sup>11</sup>, that “ he “ was a man of slender parts, as may be discovered “ from his writings.” This the historian mentions, in order to account for the sentiments of that ancient writer concerning the millennium, who, in the opinion of Eusebius, interpreted too literally and grossly, what the Apostles had seen meet to veil under figurative language. But, not to enter here into the nature of Christ’s reign for a thousand years on the earth, before the general resurrection (a question foreign to the present purpose; and on which, if Papias erred, he erred along with many not deficient in understanding,) a man may be very unfit for judging rightly of a theological or critical question, who would be allowed, by every person of common sense, a competent witness in questions of plain fact, which had fallen under his observation; as whether Matthew had been accounted, from the beginning, the writer of such a Gospel, and whether he wrote it in Hebrew or in Greek.

§ 6. It seems to be another objection to the testimony of Papias, that he adds, “ which every one interpreted as he was able:” as if he could be understood to mean, that every one was able to interpret Hebrew. This clause is an elliptical idiom of that sort, to which something similar, in familiar conversation, will be found to occur in most lan-

<sup>11</sup> Σφοδρὰ γὰρ τοὶ σμικροὶ αὐτὸν νοῦν, ὥς αὐτὸν ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν λόγων, τεκμηραμενὸν εἶπεν φαίνεται. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. cap. 39.

guages. Nobody is at a loss to perceive the meaning to be, ‘ For some time there was no interpretation ‘ in common use, but every one who attempted interpreting, did it the best way he could.’ The manner in which this addition is made is, to me, on the contrary, a confirmation of the testimony; as it leads me to think (but in this I may be deceived,) that Papias had not from testimony this part of the information he gives; but that it was what he himself remembered, when there was no version of Matthew’s Gospel generally received, but every one who could read it in its own language, Hebrew, and either in writing, or in speaking, had recourse to it, translated it as well as he could. Thus, our Scottish Highlanders may say, at this moment, that, till very lately, they had no translation of the Bible into their mother-tongue, that they had only the English Bible, which every one interpreted to them as he was able. Could a reasonable person, on hearing such a declaration, imagine that any thing had been advanced, which could be called either absurd or unintelligible?

§ 7. THE next authority I shall recur to is that of Irenæus bishop of Lyons in Gaul, who in his youth had been a disciple of Polycarp. He says <sup>12</sup>, in the

<sup>12</sup> Ὁ μὲν δὴ Ματθαῖος ἐν τοῖς Ἑβραίοις τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλεκτῷ αὐτῶν, καὶ γραφῇ ἐξηγεῖται εὐαγγέλιον, τὸ Πέτρος καὶ τὸ Παῦλος ἐν Ῥώμῃ εὐαγγελίζουσαν, καὶ θεμελιεύων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. cap. 8.

only book of his extant, that “Matthew, among the  
 “ Hebrews, wrote a Gospel in their own language,  
 “ whilst Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel  
 “ at Rome, and founding the church there.” And  
 in a fragment of the same author, which Grabe and  
 others have published, it is said, “The Gospel ac-  
 “ cording to Matthew was written to the Jews; for  
 “ they earnestly desired a Messiah of the posterity of  
 “ David. Matthew, in order to satisfy them on this  
 “ point, began his Gospel with the genealogy of  
 “ Jesus.”

§ 8. THE third witness to be adduced is Origen,  
 who flourished in the former part of the third cen-  
 tury. He is quoted by Eusebius, in a chapter<sup>13</sup>  
 wherein he specially treats of Origen's account of the  
 sacred canon. “As I have learnt,” says Origen, “by  
 “ tradition, concerning the four Gospels, which alone  
 “ are received, without dispute, by the whole church  
 “ of God under heaven; the first was written by  
 “ Matthew, once a publican, afterwards an Apostle  
 “ of Jesus Christ, *who delivered it to the Jewish be-*  
 “ *lievers, composed in the Hebrew language.* Εκδε-  
 “ δωκοτα αυτο τοις απο ιωδαισμις πισευσασι, γραμ-  
 “ μασιν Έβραικοις συντεταγμενον.” In another  
 place he says<sup>14</sup>, “We begin with Matthew, who, ac-

<sup>13</sup> Hist. lib. vi. cap. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Αρξαμενοι απο τη Ματθαιου ος και παραδιδονται πρωτῃ λοιπων  
 τοις Έβραιοις εκδεδοκεναι το ευαγγελιον τοις εκ περιτομης πισευουσιν.  
 Comment. in Johan.

“ cording to tradition, wrote first, publishing his Gos-  
 “ pel to the Hebrews, or the believers who were of the  
 “ circumcision.” Again <sup>15</sup>, “ Matthew, writing for  
 “ the Hebrews, who expected him who was to de-  
 “ scend from Abraham and David, says, The line-  
 “ age of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abra-  
 “ ham.” Let it here be observed, by the way, that  
 the word *παράδοσις*, as used by ancient writers,  
 and sometimes by the sacred penmen, does not en-  
 tirely coincide in meaning with our word *tradition*.  
 I have here, however, employed this word  
 with the common run of interpreters, that I might  
 not be thought desirous of saying more in the ver-  
 sion than the original warrants. The word *tradition*,  
 with us, imports, as the English lexicographer rightly  
 explains it, “ any thing delivered orally from age to  
 “ age :” whereas *παράδοσις* properly implies, “ any  
 “ thing handed down from former ages, in whatever  
 “ way it has been transmitted, whether by oral or  
 “ by written testimony ; or even any instruction  
 “ conveyed to others, either by word or by writ-  
 “ ing.” In this last acceptance we find it used in  
 Scripture <sup>16</sup> : *Hold the traditions, τας παραδοσεις,*  
*which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our*  
*Epistle.* It is only when the epithet *αγραφος*, *un-*  
*written*, is added to *παράδοσις*, that it answers ex-  
 actly to the English word ; whereas all historical evi-

<sup>15</sup> Ματθαῖος μὴ γὰρ τοῖς προσδοκῶσι τὸν ἐξ Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Δαβὶδ, Ἑβραίοι·  
 γραφῶν, βιβλῶν, φησὶ, γενεσιῶς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαβὶδ, υἱοῦ Ἀβραὰμ.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 15.

dence comes under the denomination *παράδοσις*. In this acceptation of the term, therefore, to say we have such a thing *by tradition*, is the same as to say, in English, “we have this account transmitted “from former ages.” In Papias and Ireneus there is no mention of *tradition*. They spoke of what they knew, as they had immediate and most credible attestations from those who were acquainted with the writers of the Gospels, and with every circumstance relating to the publication. Their manner of expressing themselves on this head, is that of men who had the certain knowledge of what they affirm, and therefore consider it as indisputable.

§ 9. It would be endless to bring authorities. Jerom, Augustin, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Eusebius, and many others, all attest the same thing, and attest it in such a manner as shows that they knew it to be uncontroverted, and judged it to be incontrovertible. ‘But,’ say some modern disputants, ‘all the witnesses you can produce in support ‘of this fact may, for aught we know, be reducible ‘to one. Ireneus, perhaps, has had his information only from Papias; and Origen from Papias ‘and Ireneus; and so of all the rest downwards, ‘how numerous soever; so that the whole evidence ‘may be, at bottom, no more than the testimony of ‘Papias.’ But, is the positive evidence of witnesses, delivered as of a well-known fact, to be overturned by a mere supposition, *a perhaps?* for that the case was really as they suppose, no shadow of evidence

is pretended. Papias is not quoted on this article by Ireneus, nor is his name mentioned, or his testimony referred to. Nor is the testimony of either urged by Origen. As to Ireneus, from the early period in which he lived, he had advantages for information little inferior to those of Papias, having been, in his younger years, well acquainted with Polycarp, the disciple of the Apostle John. Had there then subsisted any account or opinion, contradictory to the account given by Papias, Ireneus must certainly have known it, and would probably have mentioned it, either to confirm, or to confute, it. As the matter stands, we have here a perfect unanimity of the witnesses, not a single contradictory voice : no mention is there, either from those fathers, or from any other ancient writer, that ever another account of this matter had been heard of in the church. Shall we then admit a mere modern hypothesis, to overturn the foundations of all historic evidence ?

§ 10. LET it be observed that Papias, in the words quoted from him, attested two things ; that Matthew wrote the Gospel ascribed to him, and that he wrote it in Hebrew. These two points rest on the same bottom, and are equally, as matter of fact, the subjects of testimony. As to both, the authority of Papias has been equally supported by succeeding authors, and by the concurrent voice of antiquity. Now there has not any thing been advanced to invalidate his testimony, in regard to the latter of these, that may not, with equal justice, be urged, to inva-

validate his testimony, in regard to the former. This may be extended also to other points; for, that Mark was the writer of the Gospel commonly ascribed to him, rests ultimately on the same authority. How arbitrary then is it, where the evidence is the same, and exposed to the same objections, to admit the one without hesitation, and to reject the other? Wetstein, for removing this difficulty, has suggested a distinction, insinuating, that the former may be the testimony of Papias, the latter only his conjecture. But if the words of Papias himself be attended to, no conjecture was ever worse founded than this of Wetstein. Papias speaks of both in the same affirmative tone, as of matters of public notoriety.

I shall conclude the argument with observing, that the truth of the report, that Matthew wrote in Hebrew, is the only plausible account that can be given of the rise of that report. Certain it is, that all the prejudices of the times, particularly among the Greek Christians, were unfavourable to such an opinion. Soon after the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, the Hebrew church, distinguished by the name *Nazarene*, visibly declined every day; the attachment which many of them still retained to the ceremonies of the law, in like manner the errors of the Ebionites, and other divisions which arose among them, made them soon be looked upon, by the Gentile churches, as but half-christian, at the most. That an advantage of this kind would have been so readily conceded to them by the Greeks, in opposition to all



their own prejudices, can be attributed only to their full conviction of the fact.

§ 11. DR. LARDNER'S doubts (for I can discover none in Origen) are easily accounted for. Averse, on one hand, to admit that there is any book of Scripture whereof we have only a translation, and sensible of the danger of acquiescing in an argument which would unsettle the whole foundations of his system of credibility, he is inclinable to compromise the matter, by acknowledging both the Hebrew and the Greek to be originals, an opinion every way improbable, and so manifestly calculated to serve a turn, as cannot recommend it to a judicious and impartial critic. In this way of compounding matters, Whitby also, and some other disputants on the same side, seem willing to terminate the difference. Nay, even Beausobre and Lenfant, who have treated the question at more length, and with greater warmth, than most others, conclude, somewhat queerly, in this manner. "As there is no  
" dispute affecting the foundation, that is, the autho-  
" rity of St. Matthew's Gospel, such as we have it,  
" the question about the language ought to be re-  
" garded with much indifference<sup>17</sup>."

<sup>17</sup> Ainsi n'y ayant point de dispute sur le fond de la chose même, c'est-à-dire, sur l'autorité de l'évangile de S. Matthieu, tel que nous l'avons, la question de la langue doit être regardée avec beaucoup d'indifférence. Preface sur S. Matthieu, iii. 5.

§ 12. HAVING said so much on the external evidence, I shall add but a few words, to show, that the account of this matter, given by the earliest ecclesiastical writers, is not so destitute, as some may think, of internal probability. In every thing that concerned the introduction of the new dispensation, a particular attention was for some time shown, and the preference, before every other nation, given to the Jews. Our Lord's ministry upon the earth was among them only. In the mission of the Apostles, during his own life, they were expressly prohibited from going to the Gentiles, or so much as entering any city of the Samaritans<sup>18</sup>; and when, after our Lord's resurrection, the apostolical commission was greatly enlarged, being extended to all nations throughout the world, still a sort of precedency was reserved for God's ancient people. *It behoved the Messiah*, said Jesus<sup>19</sup>, in his last instructions to the Apostles, *to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations*, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM. The orders then given were punctually executed. The Apostles remained some time in Jerusalem, preaching, and performing miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus, with wonderful success. Peter, in the conclusion of one of his discourses, without flattering his countrymen, that this dispensation of grace would, like the law, be confined to their nation, takes notice of their pre-

<sup>18</sup> Matth. x. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Luke, xxiv. 46, 47.

rogative, in having it first offered to their acceptance. To YOU FIRST, says he<sup>20</sup>, *God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.* And when the disciples began to spread their Master's doctrine through the neighbouring regions, we know that, till the illumination they received in the affair of Cornelius, which was several years after, they confined their teaching to their countrymen, the Jews. And, even after that memorable event, wherever the Apostles came, they appear first to have repaired to the synagogue, if there was a synagogue in the place, and to have addressed themselves to those of the circumcision, and afterwards to the Gentiles. What Paul and Barnabas said, to their Jewish brethren at Antioch<sup>21</sup>, sets this matter in the strongest light. *It was NECESSARY that the word of God should FIRST HAVE BEEN SPOKEN TO YOU: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* Have we not then reason to conclude, from the express order, as well as from the example, of our Lord, and from the uniform practice of his disciples, that it was suitable to the will of Providence, in this dispensation of grace, that every advantage should be first offered to the Jews, especially the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and that the Gospel, which had been first delivered to them by word, both by our Lord himself, and by his Apos-

<sup>20</sup> Acts, iii. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Acts, xiii. 46.

ties, should be also first presented to them in writing, in that very dialect in which many of the readers, at the time of the publication, might remember to have heard the same sacred truths, as they came from the mouth of Him who spake as never man spake, the great oracle of the Father, the interpreter of God ?

§ 13. IF the merciful dispensation was, in effect, soon frustrated by their defection ; this is but of a piece with what happened in regard to all the other advantages they enjoyed. The sacred deposit was first corrupted among them, and afterwards it disappeared : for that the Gospel according to the Hebrews, used by the Nazarenes (to which, as the original, Jerom sometimes had recourse<sup>22</sup>, and which, he tells us, he had translated into Greek and Latin,) and that the Gospel also used by the Ebionites, were, though greatly vitiated and interpolated, the remains of Matthew's original, will, notwithstanding the objections of Mill and others, hardly bear a reasonable doubt. Their loss of this Gospel proved the prelude to the extinction of that church. But we have reason to be thankful, that what was most valuable in the work, is not lost to the Christian community. The version we have in Greek is written with much evangelical simplicity, entirely in the idiom and manner of the Apostles. And I freely acknowledge, that if the Hebrew Gospel were still extant, such as

<sup>22</sup> Hier. Com. in Mat. lib. i. cap. 16. Matth. vi. 11. N.

it was in the days of Jerom, or even of Origen, we should have much more reason to confide in the authenticity of the common Greek translation than in that of an original wherewith such unbounded freedoms had been taken. The passages quoted by the ancients from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which are not to be found in the Gospel according to Matthew, bear intrinsic marks, the most unequivocal, of the baseness of their origin.

§ 14. It may be proper here to inquire a little more particularly what language it was that the ancient ecclesiastical writers meant by Hebrew, when they spoke of the original of this Gospel. I should have scarcely thought this inquiry necessary, had I not observed that this matter has been more misunderstood, even by authors of some eminence, than I could have imagined. Beausobre and Lenfant in particular, go so far as to argue against the probability of the fact, because, what we commonly call Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament, was not then spoken either in Palestine, or any where else, being understood only by the learned. And that the common language of the country was not meant, they conclude, from the use which Eusebius, who calls the original of Matthew's Gospel Hebrew, makes of the word Syriac, when he says of Bardasenes, that he was eloquent in the Syrian language. 'Thus,' say they, 'he knew how to distinguish between Hebrew and the language of the country, which he calls Syriac.' But in this these critics

themselves have unluckily fallen into a mistake, in supposing that Syriac was, in the time of our Lord and his Apostles, or, during the subsistence of the Jewish polity, the language of Palestine. That their language, at that time, had a mixture of the Syrian language, is acknowledged; but not that it was the same. It was what Jerom very aptly calls Syro-chaldaic, having an affinity to both languages, but much more to the Chaldean than to the Syrian. It was, in short, the language which the Jews brought with them from Babylon after the captivity, blended with that of the people whom they found, at their return, in the land, and in the neighbouring regions. It is this which is invariably called Hebrew in the New Testament; I might have said, in Scripture, no language whatever being so named in the Old Testament. It is denominated Hebrew, as Lightfoot has, from some rabbinical writings, with great probability, suggested<sup>23</sup>, because the language of the persons who returned from captivity, would readily be called, by those who possessed the land, *lingua transfluviana*, or *transeuphratensis*, the language of the people beyond the Euphrates, the river which they had passed in returning to their own country; and the name, as often happens, would be retained, when the language was much altered. We are surprised, indeed, to find this learned author, in another place<sup>24</sup>, in contradiction to this, maintaining that the Syriac was the mother-tongue of the

<sup>23</sup> Hor. Heb. Jo. v. 2,<sup>24</sup> Hor. Heb. Matth. i. 23.

Jews, after the captivity ; and still more, to observe, that he advances some things, on the subject, which will be found, if attended to, totally to subvert his argument.

§ 15. ABRAM was in Canaan called *the Hebrew*<sup>25</sup>, for this reason, probably, because he was from the farther side of the great river, not because he was descended from Heber, one indeed in the line of his progenitors, but one of whom nothing remarkable is mentioned to distinguish him from the rest. Heber was neither the first after the sons of Noah, nor the immediate father of the Patriarch. Accordingly, the word is, in that passage where Abram is so named, which is the first time it occurs, rendered by the Seventy 'ο *περατης* *transitor*. The Canaanites, amongst whom he sojourned, appear to have used the name *Hebrew* in a manner similar to that wherein the Italians use the word *Tramontani* for all who live north of the Alps. The peculiarity, in respect both of religion and of customs, which continued in Abram's posterity, in the line of Jacob, and prevented them from mingling with other nations, or adopting their manners, must have been the reason why this appellation was given to the descendants in continuance, which, in strictness, was applicable to the first comers only. But, let it be observed, that, though this term was very early used of the nation, it was not applied to the language

<sup>25</sup> Gen. xiv. 13.

brought by Abram and his family from Ur of the Chaldees, a language which they soon lost, acquiring, in its stead, that of the Canaanites, amongst whom they lived. Abram's tongue was, doubtless, Chaldee, that of the country whence he came. But we learn from the sacred historian, that Jacob his grandson (though he could not fail to understand that language, having lived so long with Laban) spoke at home a different tongue. *Laban* called the heap which they had raised *Jegar-sahadutha*: but *Jacob* called it *Galeed*<sup>26</sup>. Both names signify the same thing, *the heap of testimony*, the former being Chaldee, the latter what is now always called *Hebrew*, but then, *the language of Canaan*.

I have observed already, that the language of the Old Testament, which we now always call Hebrew, is never so called in Scripture, neither in the Old Testament, nor in the New. This is a strong presumption that it was not anciently so named by any body, and that if any language had been in the Old Testament named Hebrew, it would have been the Chaldee, agreeably to the etymology of the word Hebrew, the language of those who lived beyond the Euphrates. This, however, might be accounted no more than a presumption, perhaps but a plausible conjecture, if the language of the Israelites were not repeatedly mentioned in the Old Testament by other names. It is commonly called there *the Jews language*<sup>27</sup>, and in one place, *the language of Ca-*

<sup>26</sup> Gen. xxxi. 47.      <sup>27</sup> 2 Kings, xviii. 26. 28. 2 Chron. xxxii. 18. Neh. xiii. 24. Isa. xxxvi. 11. 13.



*naan* <sup>28</sup>. That in after-times the ancient Jewish tongue, which was often named the holy language, was also called *Hebrew*, is not denied. Josephus, in particular, names it so <sup>29</sup>, in relating the message of Rabshakeh from the king of Assyria to king Hezekiah above referred to, as he uses the word Ἑβραϊστὶ, in *Hebrew*, where the sacred historian has said יהודית *Jehudith*, and the Seventy Ἰουδαϊστὶ, in the *Jews language*. But this is long posterior to the finishing of the canon of the Old Testament; for Josephus did not write till after the destruction of Jerusalem, towards the end of the first Christian century. In the prologue to the Book of Ecclesiasticus, the term Ἑβραϊστὶ is likewise used, but it is not certain in what acceptation. By the account given there, that book was translated into Greek in the time of Ptolemy Evergetes king of Egypt, by Jesus, who was the son of Sirach, and the grandson of Jesus the author. As the original, therefore, must have been written long after the captivity, it is much more probable that it was composed in the dialect spoken in Palestine at the time, than that it was written in a dead language, understood only by the learned, and consequently that the word occurs, in that prologue, in the same acceptation wherein it is always used in the New Testament. It has, in my judgment, been proved beyond contradiction by the learned, particularly Bochart <sup>30</sup>, Walton <sup>31</sup>, and Le Clerc <sup>32</sup>, that

<sup>28</sup> Isa. xix. 18.

<sup>29</sup> Antiq. lib. x. cap. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Canaan*, L. ii. c. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Prolegomena*, iii. 13, &c.

<sup>32</sup> *Proleg. in Pentateuch. Diss. I. V.*

the language of the Old Testament is no other than the native tongue of the Canaanites, which, in Greek writers, is called Phenician, and did not materially differ from the dialect of the Tyrians, Sidonians, and Carthaginians. *Canaan* is rendered by the Seventy <sup>33</sup> φοινίκη *Phenicia*. A *Canaanitish* woman φαινισση <sup>34</sup>, a *Phenician* woman, and the land of Canaan is called ἡ χώρα των φοινικων <sup>35</sup>, *the country of the Phenicians*. And even in the New Testament we have a plain proof that the names were used promiscuously, inasmuch as the person who is called by one Evangelist a woman of Canaan <sup>36</sup>, is denominated by another Evangelist a Syrophenician <sup>37</sup>.

§ 16. AT the same time it ought to be remarked that the language of Chaldea, which, before the captivity, seems never to have been denominated Hebrew, was always, by the Jews, distinguished by some other name. The most common was that which, in the English translation, after the Septuagint and the Vulgate, is rendered *Syrian*, but is in the original אַרְמִית *Aramith*. It is so called in some of the places above quoted, and in like manner by Ezra <sup>38</sup>. The Oriental name *Aram*, though commonly rendered *Syria*, does not exactly correspond in meaning to this word, at least in the use made of it in latter times. The boundary of Syria on the

<sup>33</sup> Exod. xvi. 35.

<sup>36</sup> Josh. v. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Mark, vii. 24.

<sup>34</sup> Exod. vi. 15.

<sup>36</sup> Matth. xv. 22.

<sup>38</sup> Ezra, iv. 7.

east, when the name came to be used in a more confined manner, was the river Euphrates; whereas Aram comprehended large tracts of country beyond the river, as Mesopotamia, Chaldea, Assyria. Syria was included, but it made only a part. Now the Jewish language was so different from this, that it is manifest the common people anciently in Judea understood nothing of *Aramic* or Chaldee. For a proof of this we need recur only to some of the places above referred to<sup>39</sup>. Further, it is of the same people, the Chaldeans, that the Prophet speaks in this prediction<sup>40</sup>: *Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from afar, O house of Israel, saith the Lord; it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.*

§ 17. BUT, it may be said, since the name *Aram* included the country commonly called Syria, and was equally applicable to it as to any other part, and since the word *Aramith* was employed to denote the language of the whole; the Syrian and the Chaldean must have been one and the same language. That they were so originally, I am fully convinced. In process of time, however, from the different fates to which the eastern parts, and the western, of that once great empire were subjected, there gradually sprang up a considerable difference between them, insomuch that, in latter times, they may, not unfitly,

<sup>39</sup> 2 Kings, xviii. 26. Isa. xxxvi. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Jer. v. 15.

be denominated different languages ; though still they have more affinity to each other than any other two of the Oriental tongues. The same language is called also very properly <sup>41</sup>, *the tongue of the Chaldeans*. Now as the Jews, when they returned from captivity, brought a dialect of this language with them into their own country, it suited their national pride to adopt such a general name as Hebrew, which, though it may signify, when explained from etymology, the language spoken beyond the river, would be generally understood to denote the language of the people called Hebrews, a name by which their nation had been distinguished from the beginning. This appellation, therefore, must appear more eligible to them, than any name which would serve more directly to remind themselves and others, that they had lived so long in subjection to another people ; a disagreeable effect, which could not fail to result from their calling the language they had adopted Chaldee, Babylonian, or even the language of Aram. Besides, to have called it so, would have confounded it with a language considerably different.

§ 18. WE have no reason to consider the dialect which the Jews introduced into Judea, on their return from the Babylonish captivity, as entirely pure. But in whatever state it might have been at first, it cannot be imagined that its purity could have been

<sup>41</sup> Dan. i. 4.

preserved five hundred years, especially considering the great variety of calamities, as well as the different species of tyranny which the nation experienced in that interval. The language of the neighbours, and of those who, from the circumjacent countries, had, during the people's absence, possessed the land, which was chiefly Syriac, would have a considerable share in the ordinary speech. With these we might expect to find a mixture of Persic, Greek, and Latin, words, as Judea had been successively subjected to the Macedonians, the Persians, and the Romans. Exactly such it is found to have been in the time of our Saviour. What, therefore, is called Hebrew, in the New Testament, and by the earliest fathers, is not the language of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, spoken by the Jews in Palestine before the captivity; it is not the Chaldee spoken in Babylon; neither is it the Syriac spoken in the neighbouring country of Syria; but it is a dialect formed of all the three languages, chiefly the two last blended together, and which is therefore properly denominated Syro-Chaldaic, as having a great affinity to both, and, at the same time, retaining much of the old Hebrew idiom.—After the destruction of Jerusalem, the extinction of the Jewish polity, and the dispersion of the people by the Romans, their particular dialect fell quickly into disuse; and Syriac, the language of the province (for to Syria Palestine had before now been annexed), became soon the prevailing language of the whole country. This will perhaps, in part, account for the undoubted fact, that a correct

copy of Matthew's original was in a short time nowhere to be found. The very dialect shared in the fate of the people, and did not long survive their city and temple.

§ 19. FURTHER, that the language of the Syriac version of the New Testament (though justly accounted much nearer to the language used by our Lord and his Apostles than that of any other version now extant) is not properly the same language, may be proved from that very translation itself; where we sometimes, not always, find a difference between the words which the sacred writers have retained in their original form, and those employed by the Syriac interpreter. In some cases, I admit, they are the same. Thus, the Evangelist Mark has given, in his Gospel<sup>42</sup>, the original expression, *Talitha cumi*, used by our Lord, adding the interpretation into Greek. The Syriac translator employs also the original expression, but adds no interpretation, finding that it suits equally the Syrian language, as that which in the New Testament is called Hebrew. Nay, the same expression is used, in another Gospel in the Syriac<sup>43</sup>, where the Evangelist had not, as Mark, introduced the original words. Also many words, as *rabbi* and *abba*, are the same in both. This may likewise be said of the word *Ephphatha*<sup>44</sup> (though spelt a little differently)

<sup>42</sup> ch. v. 41.

<sup>43</sup> Luke, viii. 54.

<sup>44</sup> Mark, vii. 34.

to which no interpretation is added in the Syriac version. The small difference in spelling ought to be ascribed solely to the Greek original, and not to any variation in the Syriac from the Hebrew. It was customary, in writing Greek, to make such alterations on foreign words introduced, as suited the Grecian orthography. Hence the many changes in the Septuagint, on the names of the Old Testament. As to some proper names, which have the signification of appellatives, *Cephas* being of the same import in both languages, needed not an interpretation in Syriac as in Greek<sup>45</sup>. On the name *Thomas* there was an inconsiderable difference. What was *Thaoma* in the dialect of Jerusalem, was, in proper Syrian *Thama*. This interpretation is thrice given in the Syriac version of John's Gospel<sup>46</sup>, as answering to the Greek *Δίδυμος*, *twin*. Boanerges<sup>47</sup>, Aceldama<sup>48</sup>, and Golgotha<sup>49</sup>, are all translated by that interpreter, who would not have made this distinction, with regard to them, if he had thought them equally intelligible to Syrian readers, with the terms whereof he has given no explanation. As to the change made by that interpreter on the cry, *Eli, eli*, uttered by our Lord on the cross, I must refer the reader to the notes on the passages<sup>50</sup> where it is mentioned. On the name *Siloam*<sup>51</sup>, a small alteration is made; and no interpretation is added, as in

<sup>45</sup> John, i. 42.<sup>46</sup> ch. xi. 16. xx. 24. xxi. 2.<sup>47</sup> Mark, iii. 17.<sup>48</sup> Acts, i. 19.<sup>49</sup> Matth. xxvii. 33.<sup>50</sup> Matth. xxvii. 46. Mark, xv. 34.<sup>51</sup> John, ix. 7.

the Greek, because the word, so altered, conveys the same meaning in Syriac, which *Siloam* did in the dialect of Jerusalem, and consequently needs no interpretation. All these observations serve to show both the affinity of the two languages, and their difference. The difference, in my judgment, was enough to render one of them unintelligible to those who were accustomed only to the other; and the affinity was so great, as to render a very little practice sufficient to qualify those who spoke the one, for understanding the other. Whether the same may not be said of some northern European tongues, as German, Dutch, Danish, and Swedish, or even of those of the southern regions, as French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, I leave to those, who are best acquainted with these languages, to determine.

§ 20. I SHALL add only one remark more for evincing the difference between the language called *Hebrew* in the New Testament, and the Syriac: it is this, that the name always given to Syria, in the Syriac version, is not *Aram*, as in the Old Testament, but סוריא *Suria*; whence, according to analogy, the name appropriated to the language is סוריאית *Suriaith*<sup>52</sup>; whereas Ἑβραϊστί, in the Greek New Testament, or τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλεκτῷ, is never rendered *Suriaith*, but *Ghibraith*. See the passages quoted

<sup>52</sup> Shaffii Lexicon Syriac. N. T. editio 2<sup>da</sup> prætermissa.



in the margin <sup>53</sup>; in some of which, we have both the name itself, in what is called *Hebrew*, the language of the place, and, for the sake of the Syriac reader, an interpretation of the name into that tongue. This shows evidently, that the Hebrew word had no currency with them, as it needed an explanation. Nay more, in the postscript subjoined to the Syriac version of this Gospel, the language in which Matthew wrote and preached, is not termed *Suriaith*, but *Ghibraith* <sup>54</sup>. Let it be observed, that I urge this, not as a testimony of the fact, (as a testimony it is not needed, and would be of very little consequence,) but solely, to mark the distinction observed in the application of the words Syriac and Hebrew. But, enough for showing that the language called *Hebrew* by the writers of the New Testament, is not the same with the language of the Old Testament, which is never in Scripture called *Hebrew*; that it is neither pure *Syriac* nor *Chaldee*, but that it approaches nearest the last of these, though with a considerable mixture of the other two. An attention to these things will serve to show, how ill-founded many things are, which have been advanced on this subject, by Basnage, Beausobre, and others <sup>55</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Luke, xxiii. 38. John, v. 2. xix. 13. 17. 20. Acts, xxi. 40. xxii. 2. xxvi. 14. Rev. ix. 11. xvi. 16.

<sup>54</sup> The postscript, literally translated, is, "Here endeth the  
" holy Gospel of Matthew's preaching, which he preached in  
" Hebrew, in the land of Palestine."

<sup>55</sup> In a late celebrated work, an hypothesis is hinted which

§ 21. **WHEN** men's opinions favour their known prejudices, this circumstance is a considerable abate-

differs from all the preceding. "Did Christ," says Mr. Gibbon, Vol. 4. p. 381. N. 131, "speak the rabbinical or "Syriac tongue?" The latter part of this question is answered already: to the former the answer is plain. No such tongue was known then as the rabbinical. This dialect, which owes its origin to the dispersion of the Jews, after the destruction of Jerusalem, by the Romans, was never the language of the people anywhere: its use was solely among the Jewish doctors or rabbies, whence it has its name. The language of the people would, after they were scattered through Europe, Asia, and Africa, soon be supplanted by the languages of the different regions into which they were dispersed. As to those Jews who were qualified for study, they had the strongest inducements to make the language of the Old Testament the principal object of their attention. The constant use of it in their synagogues served both as a spur to the study, and as an help in the acquisition. When use had rendered it familiar to them, nothing could be more natural than to employ it as the medium of correspondence with their learned countrymen in distant lands. They had no other common language; and this had one advantage (of great moment to them, considering the unchristian treatment they commonly met with from christian nations) that nobody understood it but themselves. From using it, at first, in conveying their remarks on the sacred text, they came gradually to extend it to the discussion of other topics, historical, philosophical, &c. It will easily be conceived that, having no standard but the O. T. they would be often at a loss for words; for however rich that language may, originally, have been, it is but a small part of its treasure which can be contained in so narrow a compass. How much would one of us find himself embarrassed in composing in Eng-

ment from the authority of such opinions ; and even when their testimony favours their prejudices, there is still ground for abatement, though in a less de-

lish, if limited to the words employed in the common translation of the Old Testament. The rabbies, to rid themselves of this difficulty, had recourse to two expedients. One was, to form, analogically, from biblical roots, derivatives, to the meaning of which, the analogy of the formation would prove a sufficient guide. Thus from verbs occurring only in the conjugation *kal*, they form regularly the *niphal*, *hiphil*, *hophal*, and *hith-pael*; also verbal nouns, participles, &c. From abstracts they form concretes, and conversely. There is reason to believe that many of those words are genuine Hebrew, though in the few ancient books extant they do not occur. But whether genuine or not, was of little consequence, as the regular formation rendered them intelligible. Their other expedient was (what, in some degree, is used by writers in every tongue, when in a strait) to adopt words from other languages. The chief resources of the rabbies have been Chaldaic, Arabic, Greek, and Latin: they do not reject entirely the aid of modern tongues. The Grammar of the rabbinical, is that of the ancient Hebrew. The Lexicon of the former contains that of the latter, and a good deal more. To illustrate the difference by a comparison, I hardly think that the rabbinical differs so much from the Hebrew of the Old Testament as the Latin of the 7th and 8th centuries differs from that of the Augustine age. Though the question as proposed by Mr. Gibbon, has no relation to the language of Matthew's Gospel: yet, as it is natural to conclude, (and I am persuaded, is the fact,) that the language spoken by our Lord was that in which Matthew wrote, I have thought it reasonable to take this notice of it, knowing that the slightest suggestions of a writer of eminence, rarely fail to make an impression on some readers.

gree ; men not being so easily misled in matters of testimony, as in matters of opinion. The contrary holds, when either the opinion, or the testimony given, is unfavourable to the prejudices of the person who gives it. Such, doubtless, was the case of the ancient Gentile Christians, when they gave a testimony which, in any respect, favoured the pretensions of the Nazarenes. Their testimony is itself, at least, a strong presumption of their impartiality, and of the justice of a rival claim. The reverse is the natural presumption in regard to the opinion of a modern disputant, when that opinion serves manifestly to support a favourite tenet, controverted by an adverse sect. This consideration will be found greatly to diminish the weight, if it can be said to have any weight, of what has been advanced on this head, in latter ages, against the uniform suffrage of antiquity.

§ 22. THAT this Gospel was composed by one born a Jew, familiarly acquainted with the opinions, ceremonies, and customs, of his countrymen ; that it was composed by one conversant in the sacred writings, and habituated to their idiom ; a man of plain sense, but of little or no learning, except what he derived from the Scriptures of the Old Testament ; and, finally, that it was the production of a man who wrote seriously, and from conviction ; who as, on most occasions, he had been present, had attended closely to the facts and speeches which he related ; but who, in writing, entertained not the

most distant view of setting off himself by the relation ; we have as strong internal evidence as the nature of the thing will admit ; and much stronger than that wherein the mind, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, acquiesces. Now, exactly such a man the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew must have been ; of whom, as we have seen, we have an historical proof, quite unexceptionable, that he was the author.

§ 23. THAT this history was primarily intended for the use of his countrymen the Jews, we have, in aid of historical evidence, very strong presumptions, from the tenor of the book itself. Every circumstance is carefully pointed out, which might conciliate the faith of that nation ; every unnecessary expression is avoided, which might, in any way, serve to obstruct it. To come to particulars : there was no sentiment relating to the Messiah, with which the Jews were more strongly possessed, than that he must be of the race of Abram, and of the family of David ; Matthew, therefore, with great propriety, begins his narrative with the genealogy of Jesus. That he should be born at Bethlehem, in Judea, is another circumstance, in which the learned among the Jews of those times were universally agreed. His birth in that city, with some very memorable circumstances that attended it, this historian has also taken the first opportunity to mention. Those passages in the Prophets, or other sacred books, which either foretell any thing that should happen to him, or admit an

allusive application, or were, in that age, generally understood to be applicable to events which concern the Messiah, are never passed over in silence, by this Evangelist. The fulfilment of prophecy was always to the Jews, convinced of the inspiration of their sacred writings, a principal topic of argument. Accordingly, none of the Evangelists has been more careful than Matthew, that nothing of this kind should be overlooked. And, though the quality I am going to mention, is not always to be discovered in modern translations, none of the sacred penmen has more properly avoided the unnecessary introduction of any term offensive to his countrymen <sup>56</sup>.

§ 24. THAT we find so much of this kind in the Greek, has been urged by some, as an argument, that it is the original of this Gospel, though, in fact, it proves no more, than that it is either the original, or a close translation; for other acknowledged versions can be produced, in which this circumstance is equally observable. In regard to this, I frankly own that the Greek, in my judgment, has not many of those peculiarities which may be called marks of translation. That which might chiefly appear such to a critic, is no other than what might naturally be expected in a Jewish original, on the subject of religion, written in that age and country. The quality I allude to, is the frequent recurrence of the Oriental idiom, in which Matthew, I believe,

<sup>56</sup> Ch. i. 11. N.

will not be found to abound more than the other Evangelists, Mark, Luke, and John, who, by the acknowledgment of all parties, wrote in Greek. Some other arguments of this kind, as, that the quotations from the Old Testament are generally in the words of the Septuagint, that the words used on certain occasions, by our Lord, are retained and explained, are fully answered by Simon<sup>57</sup>, to whom, that I may not prove tedious, I must refer the reader.

§ 25. THERE is, however, one argument from the language, and but one, that has occurred to my observation, which forms, at least, a presumption that the Greek is a version. Though the sacred writers, in that language, sometimes retain in their narratives, without adding an explanation, a memorable Oriental word, in frequent use among the people, are known to all connected with them, such as *Hosanna*, *Hallelujah*; we never find, in the moral or didactic part, any thing introduced, from a different tongue, which renders the import of a precept unintelligible to those unacquainted with the tongue. Indeed, in the history, the very words spoken (to impress those more strongly who happen to understand them) are, though seldom, sometimes mentioned, but they are always accompanied with an interpretation, that no reader may be at a loss for the meaning. Such are *Ephphatha*, *Tali-*

<sup>57</sup> Hist. Crit. du Texte du N. T. ch. v, &c.

*tha cumi*, and the exclamation on the cross. But the prohibition of what is criminal, and that under a severe sanction, where the crime itself is expressed in an unknown tongue, and left unexplained, is totally without a parallel in holy writ. Of this we have an example in the words thus rendered in the common version <sup>58</sup>: *Whosoever shall say to his brother, RACA, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, THOU FOOL, shall be in danger of hell fire.* I think, with Dr. Sykes, that ρακα, in this place, ought to be understood as an Oriental, and not a Greek word, as well as ρακα; for מרה *moreh*, is actually such a word, and could not be represented otherwise in the Greek character. The English translators, therefore, had the same reason for rendering the latter clause, *Whosoever shall say Moreh*, that they had for rendering the former clause, *Whosoever shall say Raca*. It is, at least, presumable, that the same caution which led the writer to preserve the original term in one member of this sentence, would lead him also to preserve it in the other, more especially as this is the clause which contains the severest threatening.

Besides, our finding that this word is a term of reproach in the dialect of Palestine, as well as the other, adds greatly to the probability, that it was so understood by the writer. Moreover, if this be interpreted as a Greek word, and rendered *thou fool*, it will coincide with *raca*, *stultus*, *fatuus*, which

<sup>58</sup> Matth. v. 22.



can hardly be rendered otherwise ; whereas, there is evidently intended here, a gradation in the crimes, as there is a gradation in the punishments. Now, let it be observed, that this manner, in such a case as the present, suits more the excessive scrupulosity of a translator, than the simplicity and plainness of an inspired writer, who means to instruct his readers in every duty, and to warn them against every danger. Did the sacred penmen find it necessary to employ Oriental terms, because those reproachful names had nothing equivalent to them in the Greek language, and consequently, because those who spoke Greek, not being susceptible of the guilt, implied in using those words, were in no danger of incurring the punishment ? This is too absurd to be believed by any body. There is no language, ancient or modern, in which abuse may not be uttered ; and indignation, contempt, and abhorrence, signified, in the highest degree. In such a case, therefore, it would be unaccountable and unparalleled in an inspired author to adopt terms unintelligible to the people whose language he writes, and leave them unexplained ; but this manner is not at all to be wondered at in a translator, especially when we consider how apt the early translators among the Jews were to carry their scruples this way to excess. I had occasion to observe before <sup>59</sup>, that one of the greatest difficulties in translating, is to find words in one language, that perfectly correspond to those of

<sup>59</sup> Diss. II. Part I. § 4.

another, which relate to manners and sentiments. In most other matters there is, comparatively, but little difficulty. The word *moreh*, here used by the Evangelist, differs only in number from *morim*, the compellation with which Moses and Aaron addressed the people of Israel, when they said <sup>60</sup>, with manifest and indecent passion, as rendered in the English Bible, *Hear, now, YE REBELS*, and were, for their punishment, not permitted to enter the land of Canaan. The word, however, as it is oftner used to imply rebellion against God than against any earthly sovereign; and as it includes disbelief of his word, as well as disobedience to his command, I think better rendered in this place *miscreant*, which is also, like the original term, expressive of the greatest abhorrence and detestation. In this way translated, the gradation of crimes, as well as of punishments, is preserved, and the impropriety avoided, of delivering a moral precept, of consequence to men of all denominations, in words intelligible only to the learned.

Dr. Owen remarks that the Syriac interpreter did not take the word in this sense; for, though he retains *raca* untranslated, he renders *moreh* by a word that signifies *fool*. But this difficulty vanishes on reflecting that the language of Palestine, as has been shown, was not then Syriac; though it contained a considerable mixture of Syrian words. Now, as that interpreter translated from the Greek, he must

<sup>60</sup> Numb. xx. 10.

have been sensible that *paxa* was not Greek but Syriac, and that its meaning suited the scope of the passage. It, therefore, needed no translation in a Syriac book. On the contrary, he must have perceived that *μωρε* is a Greek word, a term of reproach, and consequently, in some measure, suiting the scope of the passage. But, if faith is due to our best lexicons, (the Heptaglotton of Castellus, in particular) it is not, in this acceptation, Syriac, though it is both Hebrew and Chaldean. That the Syriac interpreter should, in translating a Greek book, consider *μωρε* as Greek, which he knew not to be Syriac, and should translate it accordingly, is not more surprising than that the Latin, or any other interpreter, should do so. But this is no reason why those who know that the connection which the dialect of Judea had with the ancient Hebrew and Chaldaic, was, at least, not inferior to that which it had with Syriac, should not recur to those tongues, as well as to the latter, for light in doubtful cases. So much for Matthew's language.

§ 26. As the sacred writers, especially the Evangelists, have many qualities in common, so there is something in every one of them, which, if attended to, will be found to distinguish him from the rest. That which principally distinguishes Matthew, is the distinctness and particularity with which he has related many of our Lord's discourses and moral instructions. Of these his sermon on the mount, his charge to the Apostles, his illustrations of the

nature of his kingdom, and his prophecy on mount Olivet, are examples. He has also wonderfully united simplicity and energy in relating the replies of his Master to the cavils of his adversaries. He has, at the same time, his peculiarities in point of diction. Of these I know none more remarkable than the phrase *ἡ Βασιλεια των ουρανων*, *the kingdom, or reign of heaven*, which is used by him about thirty times, and by no other sacred writer. The other Evangelists, in parallel passages, always say *ἡ Βασιλεια του Θεου*, *the kingdom, or reign of God*, an expression which occurs only five times in Matthew. Being early called to the apostleship, he was an eye and ear witness of most of the things which he relates. And, though I do not think it was the scope of any of these historians, to adjust their narratives by the precise order of time wherein the events happened; there are some circumstances which incline me to think, that Matthew has approached at least as near that order as any of them. They do not call their works *histories*; and as to the import of the title *εὐαγγελιον* commonly given, it is, in this application, well explained by Justin Martyr, a writer of the second century, who makes it equivalent to *απομνημονευματα*, *memorable things, or memoirs*, according to the explanation of this word given by Johnson, which he defines, *An account of transactions familiarly written*.

§ 27. It has been shown, that we have reason to consider Matthew's Greek Gospel, which we at

present possess, as a version from the original, written in the language spoken in Palestine in our Lord's time, and during the subsistence of the Jewish commonwealth. But as to the translator, nothing but conjecture has ever been advanced by the learned. The obscurity in which the question about the translator lies, can nowise affect the credibility of the fact, that it is a translation. Who ever doubted that the Syriac New Testament, and the old Italic, are translations? Yet the translators are equally unknown with the Greek interpreter of Matthew's Hebrew Gospel. This is oftenest the case with ancient versions; and we have reason to believe that the present is very ancient, it having been made before those freedoms were taken with the original, which have justly brought dishonour on the Nazarene and the Ebionite copies.

§ 28. THAT Matthew's Gospel was the first published, is another opinion, as was hinted already, which rests on the concurrent voice of antiquity, the same foundation with that on which our belief is built that Matthew was the author, and that the language in which he wrote his Gospel, was that kind of Hebrew which was spoken at that time in Judea. Notice was taken of Matthew's Gospel, and of Mark's, very early in the church, and before we find any direct mention of Luke's and of John's. The first who expressly mentions all the four Evangelists, is Irenæus, who mentions them as having written in the same order wherein they appear to have

been arranged in the Bible in his time, and wherein they have continued ever since. Some transcribers have, indeed, affected to arrange them differently, putting the two Apostles before the other two, who were only Evangelists. But they seem to have done this, from an opinion of the comparative rank of the writers, without controverting the order in which the Gospels were written. In the Cambridge manuscript, which is followed by some other manuscripts less considerable, the order is Matthew, John, Luke, Mark. But Matthew's title to the first place does not appear, in any view of the matter, ever to have been questioned among the ancients. Some, of late, have thought themselves warranted to assign the priority in point of time to the Evangelist Luke. Their reasons for this opinion I shall consider in the preface to that Gospel.