

THE  
TRUTH  
OF THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
GOSPEL,

Made out by

*Heathen* EVIDENCE.

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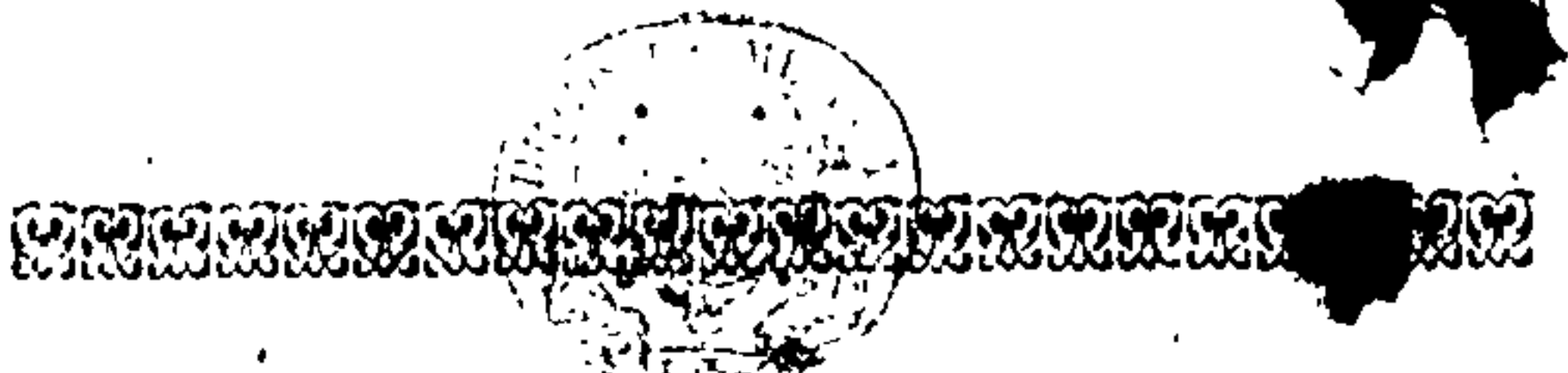


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EDINBURGH,

Printed by R. FLEMING and A. ALISON, and  
sold by G. HAMILTON and J. BALFOUR, and  
other Booksellers. M.DCC.XLI.

[ Price Six Pence. ]



## ADVERTISEMENT.

*AS to Matters of Religion, the Necessity of Revelation in general, and consequently, that GOD has been pleased to bless Mankind with the necessary supernatural Discoveries, having been made out, in a late Book upon that Subject, one is immediately led to examine, What is the particular System of Religion that has the best, or the only Title to a Divine Original? And, casting one's Eyes on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, one very soon perceives a great many Things, that seem extremely promising on the Side of the Christian Institution.*

*But, before one goes about to propose any particular Argument, in order to prove the Divinity of that Institution, one should think, that the general Question, concerning the Credibility of the Gospel-History, ought first to be considered and determined. This is what the Author has endeavoured to do, from the Testimony of Heathens, in the few following Pages. And he cannot but think, that upon a Mind, rationally convinced of GOD's having made a Revelation to Mankind, and of the Truth of the History of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the particular Arguments in Favour of Christianity will irresistibly operate: So that the Author is in Hopes he has helped forward the Design of the forecited Book, and farther cleared the Way for the Evidences of our holy Religion, to exert all their Force upon every free-thinking considerate Person.*





T H E  
T R U T H  
O F T H E  
HISTORY *of the* GOSPEL.

**E**VERY Man who applies himself to study, and who, by his own Researches, has come to the Knowledge of Things, cannot but have observed, that as the particular Things, or Existences, whose several Properties, Relations and Agreements, make up the Matter of his Knowledge, are various, and of quite different Natures; so the Measures, or Proofs, whereby a Man is led to the Perception of Truth, or to the Knowledge of those different Things in themselves, or, as they are related to one another, are equally different, and must necessarily be so, as they immediately arise from the *different Nature* of the Things themselves. And indeed the Attempt would be extremely foolish, to go about to explain the Truth of a Thing, by that Kind of Proof with  
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which the Nature of the Thing itself has no Sort of Connection : Nor is it less absurd to demand, in any Case, that Sort of Proof, which the Nature of Things will not admit of. The real Knowledge of Mankind, and of every intelligent Being, lyes wholly in the Perception of Things themselves, which every Body will confess, can only be apprehended by those Means that are suited to their Nature. Now, the Things, or Existences, whose several Properties, Relations and Agreements, are the Objects of our Knowledge, and beyond which we can know nothing, may be reduced to these two general Heads.

*First*, There are such Things, whose *inward Nature* is in no Degree *precarious*, depending on Will and Pleasure, but in itself is *fixed* and stable, immutable, absolutely independent, and whose Truth and Certainty, whose real Existence, every Mind capable of apprehending it, may, at *all Times*, and in *all Places*, perceive and understand. Of this Sort I reckon *Geometrical Truths*, the *Moral Virtues*, and the *Being and Perfections of the Deity* : In discovering the Truth of which, as *to the two first*, we look immediately into the Things themselves, we perceive their essential Properties and Relations, and are infallibly certain about their Agreements ; and as *to the last*, *viz.* the *Existence of God*, we here indeed come to the Knowledge of this Truth by attending to the World about us, these finite dependent Beings, which, we are absolutely sure, must be the Effects of Divine Power, Wisdom and Goodness ; but in another World, there is Reason to think, we shall have immediate Vision or Intuition.

In the *next Place*, there are such Things, whose Natures have *nothing in them of Necessity*, and which for their Existence, their Properties and Affections,  
entirely

entirely *depend* on the Will of other Beings : Of this Sort I reckon all the several Things of this visible World, that are the free Productions of the Sovereign Mind, and all the particular Actions or Effects of inferior voluntary Agents. And in acquiring the Knowledge of such Things, the most direct and immediate Way is, that of the Testimony of our *Senses*. Thus, our Senses assure us of a vast Variety of Creatures in Heaven and in Earth ; they discover to us the Vicissitude of Day and Night, of Summer and Winter, Seed-Time and Harvest ; they distinguish the Individuals of our own Species, and they let us know what particular Actions this or that Man is the Author of. But, as to Things of this Sort, how extremely scanty should our Knowledge be, had we no other Way to acquire it ? Going no farther than the immediate Testimony of our Senses, no Man could know that this World was existing before he observed it ; nor could we be certain there now is, or ever was, any more of this Earth, or that it now is, or ever was any further inhabited, than this small Spot of Ground with which we are acquainted. All Mankind therefore, who, of Things under the Sun, pretend to know any more than those few Articles, about the Truth of which their Senses immediately inform them, must necessarily allow, *There* is some other Way than the immediate Testimony of our Senses, whereby we can come to the certain Knowledge of those Things whose Existence *depends* on the Will and Pleasure of other Beings. And since this Knowledge cannot possibly arise from our looking into the Nature of the Things themselves, as we do in the Case of *Geometrical* Existences, &c. whose Nature and Properties are independent, absolutely necessary, and must therefore ap-  
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pear in all Ages, and in all Places, unalterably the same; the only remaining Way seems to be that of the Information, or *Testimony* of other intelligent Beings, upon whose Truth and Veracity we can safely rely.

Thus, from the Information of others, we know and rest assured, that this World, in its present Situation, or under the Direction of the same general Laws that produce Day and Night, &c. has subsisted for so many Ages past, and has, all along, been inhabited by such particular Kinds of Animals, whereof the Individuals have been continually succeeding to one another: After the same Manner we certainly know, that, besides this Island of *Britain*, there are, at this Day, in the Earth, a great many other Islands, and vast Continents, all inhabited, that are divided in distinct States and Kingdoms, and whole Forms of Government, whose Laws and Customs, in many Instances, do all differ from one another: And thus, likewise, we are perswaded beyond doubting, that such particular Persons did live, and such others are now living in the World, and were the Authors of such particular Actions. It is from this Source, I mean, from the Testimony of others, that, with respect to this Sort of Things, whose Existence depends on the Free-will of other active Beings, our greatest Stock of Knowledge arises: And however it cannot be universally affirmed, that, in every Article, we may depend safely on *human* Testimony; yet this no more renders our Knowledge, founded on such Proofs, uncertain or precarious, than a Man's being led, in the Use of his *rational* Faculties, into a particular Opinion contradictory to Reason, or to the Nature of Things, can render our Knowledge, arising from Reason, or the Nature

Nature of Things, a Matter of mere Uncertainty. Such is the Constitution of human Nature, or, by such Principles are all Mankind governed, that, in numberless Instances, we can be absolutely sure of the Truth of things, from the Information or Testimony of other People. We regard it as an undoubted Truth, that just now there is such a Nation as the Kingdom of *France*, where the present Prince is *Lewis XV.* whose Will, in the publick Administration, is subject to no Controul: And, as fully do we rest assured, that, in the City of *Rome*, still subsisting, and now the Seat of the Popes, there was, about MDCCC. Years ago, an Emperor called *Augustus*, who, in the Battle of *Actium*, overthrew *Anthony*, who, oftener than once, shut up the Temple of *Janus*, and who, for many Years, peaceably enjoyed the sovereign Dominion of a great Part of the World. About the Certainty of such Things we are as much satisfied, as about any Proposition in *Euclid*. “So many Circumstances, says *Mr. Toland*, “frequently concur in History, as render it equal “to Intuition: Thus, says he, I can as soon deny “my own Being, as the Murder of *Cicero*, or the “Story of *William the Conqueror* \*.” And indeed all Mankind rely on human Testimony; we venture our Lives and Fortunes upon it; in our own Experience we find ourselves safe in trusting it; our Stock of Knowledge would be extremely poor and inconsiderable, nay, in nowise could Mankind live associated without it.

Now, upon this Sort of Certainty, *universally* depended on, and in this its Influence, absolutely necessary for the Subsistence of human Society in any Form

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\* Christianity not mysterious, p. 128.

Form whatsoever, do we rest assured of the Truth of the *Gospel-History*, namely, *That*, so many Ages ago, there were in the World such Persons as *Jesus Christ* and his *Apostles*; *That* they taught such particular Doctrines; *That* they wrought such extraordinary Works; *That* *Jesus Christ* was *crucified* at *Jerusalem*; *That* his Apostles confidently reported, *He rose* again from the Dead, and *ascended* into Heaven; *That*, in testifying this his Resurrection, and Ascension, and in publishing his Doctrines, beginning at *Jerusalem*, they went through the World, and every where *suffered* the greatest Hardships, and cruellest Persecutions, pretending, that in this Ministry, they were *employed by Heaven*. These, I say, are the Things, as to the Certainty of which we are fully satisfied from human Testimony. And as the Nature of the Things themselves cannot possibly suffer their Truth, or the Reality of their Existence, to be made out after any other Manner; so those Persons who demand that Sort of Proof that is founded in the independent absolute *Necessity* of the Existence, the Properties, and Affections of Things, are most unreasonable, and would be gratified in what the *Nature* of Things renders simply impossible: Which is so far from thinking freely, and as it becomes a reasonable Being, that it is thinking most absurdly, and in clean Contradiction to that universal Standard, whereby all our Thoughts and Sentiments ought entirely to be directed, and without our attending to which, we can never hope, in any Instance, to discover Truth, or to arrive at Certainty.

Nor can a Man justify his refusing to admit the Truth of the Things above mentioned, in alledging, that those Things being made the *Foundation* of a religious Institution, upon which we are to venture  
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our Happiness in another World, they become of *too great* Consequence to have their Certainty depending on *human* Testimony. For, the Question is not about the Importance of the Things, but about their Truth and Reality ; whether there were in the World such Persons, and whether those Persons were the Authors of such Actions ? If these Articles be counted of Importance, our Inquiries into their Certainty ought to be the exacter, the more strict and rigorous, without all Biass or Prejudice : And if, after a diligent and narrow Search, they are still found to be true, they must, *in Reason*, be allowed to operate according to their Nature. Mean while, to pretend, that such Articles, whose Existence can no otherways be explained, are too considerable to depend for their Certainty on human Testimony, seems to intimate, that, in ascertaining the Truth of the particular Articles of such a determined *Class* of Things, we must have one Species of Proofs for those of *smaller*, and another Sort of Proofs for those of *greater* Consequence. But, would it not be ridiculous to insinuate, that, with the same Sort of Eyes, whereby I distinguish a Piece of dirty Way, as I am travelling, that would soil my Shoes, I cannot distinguish a Precipice that would break my Neck, but must have other Sort of Evidence ? And is it not equally extravagant, to alledge, that by the same Sort of Evidence, whereby the *Dejls* are well assured, *there* was such a Person as *Socrates*, *that* he taught such Doctrines, and suffered such a Death at *Athen*, we cannot rest satisfied, *there* was such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, *that* he taught such Doctrines, *that* he suffered such a Death at *Jerusalem*, *that* his *Disciples* reported he rose again the third Day after his Crucifixion, &c. ? Whatever, therefore, be the Moment of the Things, if the Reality of their

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Existence be made out by *that Sort of Proof*, which alone the particular Nature of *that Class of Things* will admit of, no Man can reject their Certainty without being highly unreasonable. “ *All possible* “ *Matters of Fact*, lays Mr. Toland, *duly attested by* “ *COEVOUS Persons, as known to them, and succes-* “ *srvely related by others of different Times, Nations, or* “ *Interests, who could neither be imposed upon themselves,* “ *nor be justly suspected of combining together to deceive* “ *others, ought to be received by us for as certain and* “ *indubitable as if we had seen them with our own Eyes,* “ *or heard them with our own Ears.* By this Means “ *it is, continues this noted Author, I believe there was* “ *such a City as Carthage, such a Reformer as Lu-* “ *ther, and that there is such a Kingdom as Poland.* “ *When all these Rules concur in any Matter of* “ *Fact, I take it then for Demonstration, which is* “ *nothing else but irresistible Evidence from proper* “ *Proofs \*.*” And, that the several Articles of the *Gospel-History*, above mention’d, are supported by such Proofs as make us as certain about their Reality, as we possibly can be about the Truth of any thing of the like Nature, suppose the Murder of *Cicero*, or the Story of *William the Conqueror*, which Mr. Toland has told us he can *no more deny than his own Being*, is to every thinking Man incontestibly manifest. Nor is it less manifest, that this Certainty, about the real Existence of such Persons and Actions as narrated in the *Gospel*, (supposing the original History, with its coeval Circumstances, as we now have it, had been transmitted down to us) we should have had, even though the *Christian* Institution had expired with the *Apostles*, and there were not now one *Christian* in the World,

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\* Christianity not mysterious, p. 17.

## *History of the Gospel.* 9

World. In this Case indeed we should have had a ready Proof, in spite of all the historical Appearances to the contrary, that the Apostles, in pretending a Commission from Heaven, were either *Impostors*, or *Enthusiasts*; but that such Persons existed, were the Authors of such Actions, and had reported such Events, could never be called in question. At the same time I am apt to think, that *Christianity* still subsisting heightens our Certainty (I do not now say, about the Divinity of that Institution, but) about the *real Existence* of such Persons, and their having taught, and performed, and reported such Things in the World. Let us view the Matter in this Light, which I shall explain with all the Clearness I am able.

In Fact, it is certain, that *just now* in the World, there are infinite Numbers of People professing *Christianity*; that this is the publick Religion of Nations, and has the Countenance and Protection of Civil Authority. There is indeed, among *Christians*, a great Variety of Sects, that have each of them their own peculiar Opinions and Sentiments, and that differ from one another in their religious Rites and Ceremonies. But what Differences soever may prevail in the *Christian* World about other Matters, in this they are all agreed, That the History of the Gospel is, in all Instances, true and genuine; and they universally observe certain Rites, such as *Baptism*, the *Eucharist*, and the *Lord's Day*, as Memorials of some very considerable Events. In *Baptism*, the initiating Rite, we renounce every other religious Institution, we undertake the Profession of *Christianity*, and we devote ourselves, through *Jesus Christ*, to the *only true God* and Father of All, to serve him *without Fear*, according to the *Gospel* of his Son, in *Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of our Life*: In the *Eucharist*, we

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commemorate the *Crucifixion of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem*, praising the Name of God for his great Salvation: And on the *first Day* of the Week, the Day on which *Christ* is said to have risen from the Dead, we joyfully assemble together to celebrate his *Resurrection*. All this is real Matter of Fact, we have it from the Information of our Senses. And the Question is, *To what Cause* must these sensible Effects be ascribed? Or, How came this Profession of *Christianity*, or the Observation of such stated solemn Rites, to be introduced into the World? No Man living can imagine, that these Things had their Rise in the present Age. We are infallibly certain, that they prevailed among our Forefathers of the former Age. And if we still go backwards from one Age to another, the same Evidence by which we are assured that this, or any other Part of the World, where *Christianity* now prevails, was inhabited, and, in such an Age, was governed by such particular Laws, Civil or Religious, will convince us, that those Things were all along existing, till we come to that Age, wherein there was no such Thing as *Christianity*, but religious Institutions of a quite contrary Nature. Thus, in tracing out the Rise of this *Phænomenon*, beginning at the present Age,

From one certain Step to another, founded on the *publick Laws*, the *unquestionable Customs* of particular Kingdoms, we are led to the undoubted Knowledge of the Existence of *Christianity* in those more distant Ages, when a considerable Part of the World was under the Dominion of the *Roman Emperors*; and running up our Enquiries through the Reigns of those Emperors, we meet with so many of them not only professing themselves *Christians*, but, by their publick Laws and Edicts, protecting and encouraging that



that Institution ; till we are interrupted in the Reign of *Julian*, who pursued other Measures, and *reviv'd* the publick Profession of *Idolatry*, as we learn from *Ammianus Marcellinus* (a), who lived in those Days ; from *Eutropius* (b), who served in that Expedition where *Julian* was killed ; and from *Libanius* (c), who seems to claim the Merit of promoting this Emperor's Passion for *Paganism*. And not only did *Julian* endeavour to support the Cause of the Gods, and to gain Profelytes to their Service, by his Authority and Example, by Sollicitation, and Bribes, but, for the same Purpose, he writ a large *Treatise*, wherein *Libanius* tells us, he goes about to show, that *those Books which make the Man of Palestine to be God, or the Son of God, contain nothing but Things silly and ridiculous* (d) ; so that, by the same Evidence, whereby we know there was such a Person as the Emperor *Julian*, we are assured there was, among Men, such a Religion as the *Christian*, which, in his Time, prevailed in the World, and which he had form'd a Design to extirpate.

But carrying on our Enquiries still backwards, (as *Libanius* gives us Ground to expect, while he compares the Reign of *Julian* to a pure Beam of Light, but the Times immediately before and after him to thick Darkness (e), we come up to two Emperors, the immediate Predecessors of *Julian*, viz. *Constantius* and his Father *Constantine*, who were both of them *Christians*, and by their publick Edicts, had afforded the Civil Protection to that Institution. As for *Constantine*, he was the first Emperor who declared himself *Christian*, as *Zosimus* informs us (f), and who, by express Laws, allowing

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(a) Lib. 22. p. 476. G. (b) Lib. 10. Cap. 16. (c) *De ulciscend. Juliani nece*, Cap. 22. (d) *Liban. Parental. in Julian*, Cap. 87. (e) *Ibid.* Cap. 146. (f) Lib. 2. p. 104.

allowing to every Man a Liberty of Conscience, became the Guardian of *Christianity* in particular, and took the Professors thereof into his special Favour (a). So far did this Emperor distinguish the *Christian* Religion, that whereas the *first Day* of the Week, was universally observed by *Christians* as a *Festival* in Memory of the *Resurrection* of *Jesus* (b), he commanded, that on that Day, all over the *Roman* Dominions, no Courts of Justice should be open, and no Work, or any Sort of secular Business, except that of *Agriculture*, should any where be done: For which we have the same Evidence, as there is for any other Law of the *Roman* Empire (c). This Revolution in Favour of *Christianity*, happened about 300 Years after the Birth of *Christ*, and immediately upon the Back of a terrible Persecution, which began in the Reign of *Dioclesian*, and, for several Years, cruelly raged among *Christians*. And as this lets us see the *Gospel* was in Being before the Days of *Constantine*; so from hence we have certain Knowledge, that it was not forged by the *Politicians* of his Reign, as an Engine to serve the Ends of Civil Government.

Nor were there wanting, a good Way back from *Constantine*, some *Heathen* Emperors who had an high Opinion of *Christ*, and prov'd very favourable towards his *Disciples*. Thus, 100 Years before *Constantine* turned Christian, *Alexander Severus* had the  
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(a) *Euseb. H. Ecclesiast. Lib. 10. cap. 5. &c.* (b) *Id. de vita Constant. Lib. iv. cap. 18.* (c) *Omnes iudices urbanaq; plebes, & cunctiarum Artium otia venerabili die solis quiescant. Ruri tamen positi agrorum cultura libere licenterq; inserviant: Quoniam frequenter evenit, ut non aptius alio die frumenta sulcis, aut vinea scrobibus, mandentur, ne occasione momenti pereat commoditas cœlesti provisione concessa. C. 1. 3. de feriis, Tit. 12.*

*Image of Christ* in his private *Chaple*, and would have built a *Temple* to him, and admitted him among the *Gods*, had not the *Priests*, from their *Divinations*, assured him, *it would turn all the World Christian*, and *cause the other Temples to be deserted* (a). However, this Emperor allowed *Christians* the free Exercise of their Religion, and publick Places for their Worship (b). And how very acceptable the Discipline and Doctrine of the *Christians* must have been to him, one may learn from these two remarkable Instances: It was the Custom among *Christians*, before they ordained their *Priests*, to publish their Names to the People, that they might have Access to make their Objections, if they had any; this he judged so worthy of Imitation, that he followed the same Course in appointing the *Governors of Provinces*: And so much did he admire this common *Maxim* among *Christians*, *Do not that to another, which you would not have another do to you*; that, in punishing Offenders, he caused the common *Cryer* to proclaim it, and made Inscriptions of it upon his own Palace, and the publick Works and Buildings (c). But as I have already

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(a) *Lamprid. apud Hist. Rom. scrip. p. 349. D. 351. E.*  
 (b) *Id. ibid. p. 347. G. 352. F.* (c) *Ubi aliquos voluisset vel Rectores Provinciis dare, vel Praepositos facere, vel Procuratores (id est, Rationales) ordinare, nomina eorum proponebat, hortans populum, ut si quisquid haberet criminis, probaret manifestis rebus; si non probasset, subiret poenam capitis. Dicebatq; grave esse, quum id Christiani & Judaei facerent in praedicandis Sacerdotibus qui ordinandi sunt, non fieri in Provinciarum Rectoribus, quibus & fortuna hominum committerentur & capita.-----Ciamaabatq; saepius, quod a quibusdam, sive Judaeis sive Christianis audierat, & tenebat: Idque per praconem, quum aliquem emendaret, dici jubebat, quod tibi non vis, alteri ne feceris. Quam sententiam usque adeo dilexit, ut & in palatio & publicis operibus praescribi juberet. Id. ibid. p. 352. D. 353 D.*

dy hinted, *Christianity* was not always thus fortunate. Under the Reigns of most of the *Heathen* Emperors, its Professors were barbarously *persecuted*: Besides that, several Men of Wit and Learning keenly attack'd it in the Way of *Argument*, and imployed all their Art to stop its Progress, and ruin its Credit in the World. And from both these Events, we are furnished with abundant Evidence for the *Truth* of the *Gospel-History*.

It is certainly a great Misfortune to the *Christian* Cause, that the Writings of those *Heathen* Authors, who endeavoured either to *reason* or to *laugh Christianity* out of the World, are lost. But those Fragments of theirs, which the *Christians* who opposed them, have transcribed in their Writings, do plainly answer my Purpose, as they pointedly inform us about so many Matters of Fact. Thus the Emperor *Julian*, ambitious of the Government only as it would enable him to restore the Worship of the Gods, in his Books against the *Christians*, so far is he from denying the Certainty of those Articles, which I have above mentioned concerning *Christ* and his *Apostles*, that he admits them all as true and genuine. He takes Notice of *Jesus* as the Son of *Mary*, said to derive his Being, not from *Joseph*, *Mary's* Husband, but from the *Holy Ghost*: (a) He quotes several Passages of the *Old Testament*,

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(a) *Julian* apud *Cyril*, lib. 8. p. 253. Oper. Vol. 6. *Chalcidius*, a *Platonick Philosopher*, (whether *Heathen* or *Christian*, learned Men are not agreed; nor will I presume to interpose) in his Commentary upon *Plato's Timæus*, p. 219. speaks of the Star that appeared at our Saviour's Birth, after this Manner: *Est alia sanctior & venerabilior Historia, quæ perhibet ortu stellæ cujusdam, non morbos mortisque denunciatas, sed descensum Dei venerabilis ad humanæ conservationis, rerumque mortalium gratiam:*



*Testament*, (some of which are transcribed in the *New*) held to be *Prophecies* concerning the *Messiah*; and at the same time would have *Matthew* and *Luke* to oppose one another in the *Genealogy* of *Jesus*: (a) He mentions his being *inrolled* along with his Father and Mother in the *Census* under *Cyrenius*: (b) He speaks of his Miracles, such as his having *Power over Spirits*, his *walking upon the Sea*, his *casting out Devils*: (c) And he tells us, that about 300 Years ago, in the *Reign of Tiberius*, *Jesus* having gained a few Followers, and those of the meanest or basest Sort, however famous he might be among such People, yet in his Life-time he did nothing memorable, unless one will reckon the Curing the Lame and the Blind, and, in the Villages of *Bethsaida* and *Bethany*, the Relieving those that were possessed with Devils, to be Feats mighty and considerable. (d) Nor does *Julian* neglect to quote some Articles of the Sayings and Discourses of our Saviour as reported in the *Gospels*. Thus he observes, that one of *Christ's* Disciples having said unto him, *Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my Father*; *Jesus* said unto him, *Follow me, and let the Dead bury their Dead*: (e) That *Jesus* the Nazarene made these Reflections, *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, for you are like unto whited Sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead Mens Bones and of all Uncleaness*: (f) That he professed he came not destroy the Law,

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*tiam: quam stellam cum nocturno itinere inspexissent Chaldæorum profecto sapientes viri, & consideratione rerum cælestium satis eximii, quasisse dicuntur recentem ortum Dei, repertaque illa majestate puerili veneratos esse, & voto Deo tanto convenientia nuncupasse.*

(a) *Julian* ubi supra, p. 252, 261, 262. (b) *Ibid.* lib. 6. p. 213. (c) *Ibid.* (d) *Ibid.* p. 191. Vid. p. 207. (e) *Ibid.* lib. 10. p. 335. (f) *Ibid.*

*Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil; assuring the World, that whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: (a) That he gave out this Command, Go and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (b) These are so many Particulars that relate immediately to Jesus Christ. And as for his Apostles; whilst Julian would have them guilty of Incantments, and of teaching that black Art to their Followers, he confesses not only that the Apostles wrought Miracles themselves, but that they imparted the same Power to others: (c) He would have St. Paul in particular, to be the greatest Conjuror that ever was: (d) He takes Notice of Peter's Vision in the Tanner's House, about abolishing the Jewish Distinction of Meats: (e) He brings in several Passages from the Writings of St. Paul, (f) such as Rom. iii. 29. x. 4. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. He frequently remarks on St. John's Doctrine, in the first Chapter of his Gospel, concerning the Divinity of Christ; his making all things, &c. on which Occasion, he mentions so many of the Apostles particularly by Name, viz. Peter, Paul, Mark, John, Matthew, Luke; (g) whereof the two last, he elsewhere proposes the Galileans should explain in their Churches, rather than go about to teach those Heathen Authors, whose Writings they condemned. (h)*

In short, apprehending, that the Doctrines of the Gospel do in no Degree authorize a persecuting Spirit, he severely checks the Christians of his Time, in telling

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(a) Julian apud Cyril, lib. 10. p. 351. (b) Ibid. lib. 9. p. 291. (c) Ibid. lib. 10. p. 339. (d) Ibid. lib. 3. p. 100. (e) Ibid. lib. 9. p. 314. (f) Ibid. lib. 3. p. 106. lib. 7. p. 245. lib. 9. p. 320. (g) Ibid. lib. 6. p. 213. lib. 8. p. 262. lib. 10. p. 327, 333. (h) Julian Epist. 42.

ling them that their Cruelties, and Persecutions against the *Heathen*, and those of their own Party who differed with them in their Sentiments about the *dead Man*(a), had no other Cause but their private Passions, since for such *Doings* they had received no Command, either from *Jesus* or from *Paul*. (b) But whatever was the Spirit of his Days, and however he accuses the *Christian* Institution of being incapable of deriving any real Goodness or Excellency to human Nature(c); yet elsewhere he lets us know, That, in former times, the holy Lives, the Charity and kind Offices of *Christians* exercised, without Distinction, towards the *Heathen*, as well as their own *Brethren*, in relieving the Poor, in succouring Strangers, and burying the Dead, had mightily conduced to establish and propagate the *Gospel*: Upon which he warmly recommends it to his own *Priests*, as they value the Interests of the Gods, to be zealous in the Pursuit of the same Virtues. *The Gods*, says he, *have vouchsafed us far greater Things than could have been expected.*

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(a) Having just now observed, that *Chalcidius* reports, as real Fact, the *Phaenomenon* that appeared at our Saviour's Birth; I cannot but likewise remark, that the *Darkness* and *Earthquake*, which the *Gospels* tell us happened at the *Crucifixion*, are as little doubted by *Phlegon* the *Trallian*, an *Heathen*, and *Freeman* to *Adrian*; who, as we learn from *Eusebius*, in his *Chron.* and others, gives this Account of the Matter:

Τῷ δ' ἔτει τῆς C. B. ὀλυμπιάδ' Θ' ἐγένετο ἑκλειψις ἡλίου μέγιστη τῶν ἐγνωρισμένων πρότερον· καὶ τοῦ ὧρου τῆς ἡμέρας ἐγένετο, ὥστε καὶ ἀσέρας ἐν ἑρανῶ φανῆναι. Σεισμός τε μέγας κατὰ Βιθυνίαν γινόμενος, καὶ πολλὰ Νικαίας κατίσχευε. Vid. Orig. in Tract. 35 ad Matt. & cont. Cels. lib. 2. p. 80. The same *Phlegon* confesses, That our Saviour had the Knowledge of future Events, and that what he foretold, did actually come to pass. From whence (according to *Origen*, in his 2d B. against *Celsus*) he seems forced to allow, *There is something of Divinity in the Gospel.*

(b) *Julian* apud *Cyril*, lib. 6. p. 205. (c) Ibid. lib. 7. p. 229.

*For in so short a Space of Time, who durst have looked for so wonderful a Revolution? But why do we count those Things sufficient, and do not rather attend to what especially has augmented the Impiety, namely, their Humanity towards Strangers, their pious Care in burying the Dead, and their seeming Holiness of Life? 'Tis a Shame that those impious Galileans, should not only provide their own, but our poor. (a)*

Thus far *Julian*, who had Inclination, Skill, and Power, sufficient to have detected a Forgery, had there been any such thing in the *Christian* Religion, and would not have failed, had he found it, to have exposed it to all Mankind; thus far, I say, the Emperor *Julian* supports the Credit of the *Evangelical* History. But before his Time, we find the same good Service done the *Gospel* by *Hierocles*.

This other Writer against *Christianity*, who is said to have excited *Dioclesian* to the Persecution he raised against the *Christians*, and to have been very active himself in carrying it on, has so little Thought of denying there was such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, or that he wrought Miracles, such as restoring Sight to the *Blind*, and other Miracles of the like Nature, that he confesses the Truth of the whole, and only means to expose the *Christians* for thinking so highly, on that Account, of *Jesus*, whilst, in his Opinion, *Apollonius* wrought greater Miracles; and yet, says he, *we do not esteem him a God, but only a Man greatly favoured of the Gods. (b)* After the same Manner does *Porphyry*, who was earlier in the Controversy than *Hierocles*, bear Witness to the Truth of Things reported in the *Gospel*.

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(a) Epist. 49. p. 429. Oper. vid. p. 305. Fragm. (b) *Eu. lib. cont. Hierocl.* p. 512.



In the Case of *Porphyrus* we are indeed very unfortunate; for not only have we lost his Books against the *Christians*, but those particular *Answers* that were made to them by *Methodius*, *Eusebius*, and *Apollinaris*: However, we are elsewhere informed, that, as he applied himself very much to the Reading of the *Scriptures*, so his Design was to overturn their Authority, by showing, that such a Composition of Things *cannot be thought to have come from God.* (a) So far, therefore, was *Porphyrus* from rejecting, that he argues upon the Truth of the *Gospel-History*. Thus he confesses, that *Jesus Christ* was punished, or suffered, as a Malefactor; *That*, at the same Time, being a Person of great Sanctity, his Soul, after Death, went up into Heaven; *That* no Man ought to speak contemptibly of him; *That* Christians, however, act a foolish Part, in worshipping him; (b) not only foolish, he certainly apprehended, but very criminal; for he tells us, that since *Jesus* came to be worshipp'd, *Æsculapius* and the other Gods have withdrawn their Protection to Mankind. (c) But his admitting the Truth of the *Gospel-History* is very apparent from his arguing upon particular Texts of *Scripture*, such as these among others, viz. *Matth.* xiv. 25, 26. where it is reported, that *Jesus* walked on the Sea: (d) *John* vii. 8, 10. concerning our Saviour's going up to *Jerusalem* to the Feast of Tabernacles: (e) *Acts* v. 5, 9, 10. about the Death of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*: (f) And *Gal.* ii. 2, &c. which informs us of *Paul's* repre-

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(a) *Theodoret.* Therap. Serm. 7. *Euseb.* H. Ecclesiast. lib. 6. Cap. 19. (b) *Porphyr.* apud *Euseb.* Demonstr. Evangel. lib. 3. p. 134. (c) Apud *Euseb.* Præp. Evangel. lib. 5. cap. 1. p. 179. (d) *Hieron.* Quest. Hebraic. in Genesim. sub init. (e) Id. adv. Pelag. lib. 2. p. 864. (f) Id. Epist. ad Demetriad. de virgin. serv.

reprehending *Peter*: (a) On all which *Porphry* makes Reflections, in order to expose the Credit of the *Gospel*.

The next Writer against *Christianity* I shall mention, is *Celsus*, who seems to have flourished about an *hundred* Years after the Crucifixion of *Jesus*. And that this Author, in his Reasoning, does likewise proceed upon the Truth of the History of the *Gospel*, is manifest from those Passages of his, which *Origen* has transcribed in his Books against him. In particular, he takes Notice of these Articles which we find recorded in the *Gospel*, and that are still professed by *Christians*, namely, *that* *Jesus* came down from Heaven (b); *that* he was supernaturally born of a *Virgin* in a Village of *Judea*; *that* this *Virgin's* Husband was a *Carpenter*; *that* they were admonished by an *Angel* to fly with the *Child* into *Egypt*; *that* he returned again from thence (c), and went about thro' the Land of *Judea*, attended with Ten or Eleven Persons, *Publicans* and *Fishers* (d); *that* he taught moral Doctrines, against *Revenge*, *Avarice*, *Ambition*, &c. such as are still extant in the *Gospels* (e); *that* he wrought *Miracles*, such as curing the *Lame* and the *Blind*, raising the *Dead*, feeding Multitudes on a few Loaves, &c (f); *that* he was betrayed and forsaken by his *Disciples* (g); *that* he was crucified along with two Malefactors (h); *that*, as he had foretold, so, it was given out, he rose again from the Dead, and appeared alive, not to the *Roman* Governor, nor to those

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(a) *Hieronym.* in Proem. Comment. in Galat. & in Loc.  
 (b) *Orig. contra Cels.* lib. 4. p. 161. 162. (c) *Ibid.* lib. 1. p. 22. 51. lib. 6. p. 325. (d) *Ibid.* Lib. 1. p. 47. (e) *Ibid.* Lib. 6. p. 286. lib. 7. p. 343. 370. (f) *Ibid.* Lib. 1. p. 53. lib. 2. p. 87, 89, 93. (g) *Ibid.* Lib. 2. p. 62. (h) *Ibid.* Lib. 2. p. 87. 85.

those who had insulted him, nor to all the People, but to his own *Disciples* (a); that this *Jesus*, some few Years before *Celsus's* Time, was the Author or Founder of the *Christian* Institution; and that his Followers esteem and worship him as *God*, or *the Son of God* (b). All these, and many other Particulars reported in the Writings of the *New Testament*, has *Origen* transcribed from *Celsus*.

It is true, this Enemy of the *Gospel* does not give out all these several Articles as real Matters of Fact, nor as Things that had actually happened. On the contrary, he would represent some of them as downright *Lies* and Forgeries, that deserve no Credit among Mankind. But however careful *Celsus* is to set every Thing in such a Light as may best answer his Design of exposing *Christianity*; yet, from the Objections he makes against the Truth of those particular Facts he calls in Question, one may easily perceive, that nothing is said, that in any Measure can lessen their Certainty; thus he tells us, 'tis a *Falseness* that *Jesus* foretold that *Judas* would betray him, and *Peter* deny him, as it actually came to pass; for had they been thus forewarned, the Premonition would have prevented both one and the other (c). As little, says he, can it be true, that *Jesus* foretold his own Death; for had he foreseen it, he would, no doubt, have done what he could to avoid it, and not voluntarily exposed himself (d). Nor, in his Opinion, did *Jesus* work Miracles: Those wonderful Things he performed, were only, as he apprehends, the Effects of *Magick* which he had learned in *Egypt*

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(a) *Orig.* Lib. 2. p. 93, 94, 98, 104. (b) *Ibid.* Lib. 1. p. 21. lib. 2. p. 87. lib. 8. p. 385. (c) *Id.* *ibid.* lib. 2. p. 71. 72. (d) *Id.* *ibid.* lib. 2. p. 67, 69, 71.

*gypt* (a). And as to his *Resurrection*; what Man, says *Celsus*, really dead, did ever arise with the same Body? Or the Man who was unable to help himself when alive, how could he return to Life again, and shew the Marks of his Punishment, the Wounds he had received in his pierced Hands? This Article therefore is a mere Fiction, and those who pretend to have been Eye-witnesses, must be held, at least, entirely *visionary* (b). After this Manner, to pointed *Matters of Fact*, possible in their own Nature, and attested by known Witnesses, does *Celsus* oppose *empty Speculation*. And his finding nothing else to object, cannot but be counted a plain Proof, that the Truth of the *Gospel-history* is beyond all reasonable Exception. In short, as *Origen* observes, *Celsus* admits the Truth of those Facts, which, he thinks, he can gloss to the Discredit of the *Christian* Institution; and pretends to reject those that would infer its *Divinity* (c). But be his Conduct what it will, he affords us certain Information, *that* about such a Time, there were such Persons in the World as *Jesus Christ* and his *Apostles*; *that* they taught such moral Doctrines; *that* they wrought such Miracles, or did many Things out of the ordinary Course of Nature, which he therefore attributes to their Skill in *Magick*; *that* *Jesus* was crucified; *that* it was confidently reported, he rose again from the Dead; *that* a religious Sect of Men was formed in the World, upon the Principles delivered by *Jesus*: And, I say, these particular Articles, besides many others, being, by *Celsus's* own Confession, undoubted Matters of Fact, are sufficient to my present Purpose, as they clearly support the *Credibility* of the History of the *Gospel*.

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(a) *Orig. ibid. lib. 1. p. 22. 30. lib. 2. p. 89.* (b) *Id. ibid. lib. 2. p. 93. 94.* (c) *Id. ibid. lib. 1. p. 49.*



To this learned Philosopher, let me now add his Friend and Contemporary *Lucian*, who, after his Way, goes about to render the *Gospel* ridiculous. And this witty Author informs us, that *that Great Man* whom the *Christians* worship, was crucified in *Palestine*, for introducing that new Sect of Religion (a): That his Followers are taught to believe, that after they have renounced the Service of the Gods, and have come to worship that *crucified Sophist*, and to live according to his Laws, they are then all Brethren: *That* their Care to succour and relieve one another, when persecuted for their Religion, is incredible: *That* in such Circumstances, they spare nothing, but have every Thing in Common, despising all Hardships, Dangers of every Sort, even Death itself, in Hopes of *Immortality* (b). This is what *Lucian* reports in his Account of the Death of *Peregrinus*, whom, he tells us, the *Priests* in *Palestine* had instructed in the *Christian* Religion (c). And in his *Catechumen*, introducing *Triephon* in the Character of a *Christian*, he makes him inform *Critias*, that we ought to swear by *that God who reigns on high, who is great, immortal, above in Heaven; by the Son of the Father; and by the Spirit proceeding from the Father; One of Three, and Three of One; those we ought to esteem the only true God* (d): *That*, as for himself, he was formerly in the same wretched Condition with *Critias*, till the bald-pated, big-nosed *Galilean*, who had been *caught up into the third Heavens, where he heard Things most charming and excellent*, happening to meet with him, had renewed him by *Baptism*, had put him in the Way towards the Blessed, and redeem'd him from the Place of the Ungodly (e): *That*  
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(a) De morte Peregrin. p. 566. (b) Ibid. p. 567. (c) Ibid. p. 565. (d) Catechum. p. 770. vid. p. 774. (e) Ibid.

God from Heaven beholds the Just and the Unjust, and writes down in Books all their Actions, to requite every Man *on that Day he hath appointed*; that forasmuch as *Christ* is come to the Gentiles, what passes in *Scythia*, in any Part of the World whatever, is likewise thus recorded (a): That we ought to begin our Prayers with *the Father* (b); seeming to point at the *Lords-prayer*: And both *Tricphon*, and *Critias* allude to *St. Paul's* Explication of the Inscription at *Athens*, *To the unknown God*, whom they now conceive to be discovered.

Thus the most early Writers against *Christianity*, who had some of them Access to converse with those who had seen and heard the *Apostles*, afford us ample Proof, that *Christians* were in Being more than 1700 Years ago; and that their original History, related in the *New Testament*, can be no forg'd Composition of a later Age. But while some laid out their Wit, to reason, or to banter *Christianity* out of the World; others were employed to suppress it, by the barbarous Arguments of *Fire* and *Sword*, by all the Cruelties of Persecution. And from hence likewise we are led to the certain Knowledge of the Existence of *Christianity*, and to perceive the Truth of the History of the *Gospel*.

*Libanius* informs us, that in order to recover People from their Attachment to the *Christian* Religion, the Emperor *Julian* not only gave the World a fine Example, in his Devotion towards the Gods, *Heroes*, *Heaven*, *Æther*, *Earth*, *Sea*, *Fountains*, *Rivers* (c); but he

(a) Ibid. p. 771, 773, 779. (b) Ibid. p. 769. 780.

(c) Οὐκ ἐθ'εράπευσε μεγαλοπρεπῶς θεοὺς, Ἡρώας, Οὐρανον, Αἰθέρα, Γῆν, Θάλατταν, Πηγὰς, Ποταμούς; ἐκ ἐπολέμησε τοῖς ἐμῇ πεπολεμηκόσιν; *Liban. Parental. in Julian*, cap. 144.

he encouraged People to return to *Heathenism*, by Reason and Argument, by his Advice and Exhortations; and when these could not prevail, he made Use of Money to persuade them. And such gentle Means this Emperor employed, not only from his apprehending, that a *Man's Conscience cannot be forc'd*, but from his being sensible, that the Cruelties which, before his Time, had been exercised, had rather furthered than hindered the Progress of *Christianity*. So that *Libanius* here gives us to understand, that in former Reigns, meaning those before *Constantine*, *Christians* for the Sake of their Religion, by a Variety of Torments, whereof he gives some Instances, had been cruelly harass'd and persecuted (a).

And indeed, if we look back into the Situation of Mankind during those Reigns, the Case will appear, as *Libanius* reports it, not only under the worst, but under these they reckon their best Emperors. Thus the Tranquillity of the World, with respect to Matters of Religion, was disturbed, and the Professors of *Christianity* came to be hardly used and persecuted in the Reign of *M. Antoninus Philosophus*. And so remarkably firm and resolute were *Christians* in adhering to their Faith, and in suffering every Thing for the Sake of it, that not only the Emperor himself takes notice of it, whilst, in his *Meditations*, he esteems it mere *Obstinacy*, and cautions the World against it (b); but *Celsus* too seems to have in his Eye the Behaviour of *Christians* in this Persecution, whilst he upbraids them with Absurdity, in setting so great a Value on their *Bodies*, as to expect for them a *Resurrection*; and yet, at the same Time, to be throwing them away

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(a) *Libanius* cap. 58. 81. What is here said against *Persecution*, may put many *Christians* to the blush. (b) *M. Anton.* lib. 11, §. 3.

in Sufferings, as if they were Things *vile* and *contem-  
ptible*: Withal, he tells them, that their Hopes of any  
Sort are extremely ill founded; for so little was God  
concerned in their Interest, that *they were dragged out  
of their Concealments, and brought to the Hands of the  
Executioner* (a).

But looking still backwards beyond the Days of  
this Emperor, into those of *Trajan*, who came into  
the World about *twenty* Years after the Death of our  
Lord; in his Reign we shall likewise find that  
*Christians* were involved, meerly on account of their  
Religion, in a very severe Persecution. Of this we  
have abundant Proof from *Pliny*, who was himself  
concerned as an Agent in the Matter. This *Roman*  
Senator, when Governor of *Bithynia*, in his *Letter to  
Trajan*, a most valuable Piece of Antiquity, tells the  
Emperor, That *the Temples and Altars of the Gods  
were every where, in Town and Country, almost totally  
deserted*. From whence we learn, that within the  
Compass of a *few* Years the *Gospel* must have made a  
wonderful Progress. At the same Time *Pliny* reports,  
that among those that were accused, and whom he  
had examined, there were some who confessed they  
had been *Christians*, but that *twenty Years ago* they  
had forsaken that Profession; avowing, however,  
that the Height of their Crime was, their being  
wont, on a stated Day, before it was light, to as-  
semble together, in order *to sing a Psalm to Christ  
as God, and to bind themselves by a Sacrament to com-  
mit no Wickedness*. (b)

Thus we see what were the Principles and Practice of  
*Christians* so many Years before, and at the Time of  
*Trajan's* Persecution, which happened about *seventy*  
Years

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(a) *Orig. contra Cels. lib. 8. p. 409, 423.* (b) *Plin. lib. 10.  
Epist. 97, 98.*



Years after our Lord's Passion. And, no doubt, *Pliny* had good Information about those particular Matters of Fact, upon which the *Christians* founded their Profession. His Uncle, the elder *Pliny*, a learned Man, and mighty inquisitive, was about *ten* Years old when our Saviour was crucified, and about *forty* when the *Christians* were persecuted under *Nero*; so that, having adopted his Nephew, and held the Direction of his Education till he was about seventeen Years of Age, it cannot well be thought but he informed him about that Sect, which was still continuing to make a considerable Noise in the World, and could not therefore, at that Time, but frequently prove the Subject of common Conversation. And, not to mention the other Opportunities which *Pliny* himself had at *Rome*, to learn the History of the *Christian* Religion, and how much his Curiosity must have been awakened, particularly, after his Uncle's Death, during *Domitian's* Persecution, which cut off and banished great Numbers of People, and even those of the highest Rank, such as *Flavius, Clemens*, who, in the Time of his Consulship, was put to Death; and his Wife, *Domitilla*, nearly related, as well as her Husband, to *Domitian*, who was banished; to whom *Dio* adds *Glabrio*, a Person of Consular Dignity, who was likewise capitally punished: (a) I say, not to mention *Pliny's* other Opportunities, and how much such Events must have awakened his Curiosity; when he was in his Government of *Bitbynia* (among the *Eastern* Churches, where there were infinite Numbers of *Christians*, of whom many, no doubt, had seen and conversed with the *Apostles*, which we know was the Case of *Polycarp* in particular,

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(a) *Dio Cass.* lib. 67. p. 766.

particular, at that Time *Bishop of Smyrna*, and universally famous) he made the most rigorous *Inquisition* possible; and yet, after all his Endeavours to get to the Bottom of the Matter, being able to discover no Forgery, no criminal Design of any Sort, was contented to regard the whole as an *extravagant Superstition*, in which, for their stubborn inflexible Obstinacy, he thought *Christians* justly deserved Punishment. *Neque enim dubitabam, says he, qualecunque esset quod faterentur, pervicaciam certe & inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri.*

But, at some Distance back from this, within about *thirty* Years of the Crucifixion of our Saviour, there happened under *Nero* a most cruel Persecution mentioned by *Suetonius*; (a) but whereof we have a more particular Account from his Co-temporary *Tacitus*, who seems to have been about fifteen Years of Age at the Death of *Nero*, and must therefore be counted an Eye-Witness of this Persecution, and might have seen and conversed with the *Apostles Peter* and *Paul*, who therein, at *Rome*, suffered Martyrdom. And from this celebrated *Historian* we understand, That *Christianity* had its Rise in *Judea*; That the Professors of it had their Name from *Christ*; That this *Christ*, in the Reign of *Tiberius*, was put to Death by *Pontius Pilate*; and That this Religion, after the Death of its Author, over-run not only *Judea*, but the City of *Rome*. (b) Here then, *Tacitus* points out to us the Place, the Time, the Author, and first Rise of *Christianity*. And certain it is, that, if we look further back into the religious State of Mankind, beyond the Reign of *Tiberius*, we shall find nothing of *Christianity*, no Vestige of any Set  
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(a) In *Nero*. cap. 16. (b) *Tacit. Annal. lib. 15. cap. 44.*

of Men, who, in their religious Principles, *opposed* the *Superstition* of the *Jews*, and the *Idolatry* of the *Nations*; but both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were in *peaceable* Possession of all their several religious Sentiments.

I would only now observe, That, so late as in the Reign of *Trajan*, there were alive not only *Apostolical* Men, the immediate Disciples of the *Apostles*, such as *Clemens*, whom *St. Paul* mentions in one of his Epistles \*, *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, &c. but the *Apostle John* himself, and *Simeon* one of the *seventy*, sent forth in our Saviour's Life-time to publish the *Gospel*, and a near Kinsman of our Lord: So that, at that Distance of Time, inquisitive Men, such as *Tacitus*, *Sueton*, *Pliny*, who mention *Christian* Affairs, had Access to the surest Means of Information. And, the *Apostle John* and *Clemens-Romanus* having died before, and *Simeon* and *Ignatius* being martyred in *Trajan's* Persecutions, those Means, in some Measure, were continued in *Polycarp* as far down as *M. Antoninus Philosophus*, under whose Reign *Polycarp* at *Smyrna*, and the *Philosopher Justin*, at *Rome* were crown'd with Martyrdom, when *Celsus* and *Lucian* were flourishing.

Thus, beginning at the present Age, wherein we have *sensible* Demonstration for the Existence of *Christianity*, and carrying our Enquiries backwards from one Age to another, we meet with *unquestionable* Evidence in every Age, for the real Being of that Institution, till we arrive to that particular Time when it *first* appeared in the World: And one cannot but confess, that as certainly as we know, *that* in those Ages the Earth was inhabited, *that* the Inhabitants

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\* Philip. iv. 3.

habitants were divided in such particular Governments, and *that* the Administration of those Governments were carried on by such particular Laws; as certainly we do know, *that* the *Christian* Religion, without Interruption, continually subsisted in all the *intermediate* Ages that ly between the present Time, and the *Reign of Tiberius Cæsar*, when *Jesus Christ* was by *Pontius Pilate* cut off, or crucified at *Jerusalem*. And as this long uninterrupted Continuance of the *Gospel*, as its overspreading the *Roman* Empire, and making its Way to other Nations, in its *three first* Centuries, amidst Persecutions, without any earthly Power to support it; as its maintaining its Ground to this very Day, are *Effects* that could not possibly have existed without an *adequate Cause*; so what Cause can be judged sufficient, but that which is explained in the *Gospel*, and which necessarily implies the Truth of the Matters of Fact therein related? I would therefore hope, that my Demand will not be deemed unreasonable, when I ask, *that* what Credit is given to the Writings of *Tacitus*, *Sueton*, &c. the *same* may be allowed to the Writings of the *New-Testament*, the original Books of *Christianity*, which *Christians*, in all Ages, have understood to contain a true Narration of Things, the first Book that ever appeared in the World with a *new System* of Religion, putting an End to all other Institutions, whether among *Jews* or *Gentiles*. And, in Fact, I have made it appear, that what the *New Testament* reports, is well attested by *Heathen* Authors, inveterate Enemies to the *Christian* Cause, namely, *that* there were in the World such Persons as *Jesus Christ* and his *Apostles*; *that* they taught such particular Doctrines; *that* they wrought Miracles; and *that* very soon after *Jesus* was crucified, the Report went current



rent among his Disciples, that he was *risen again from the dead*. Nor can such Matters of Fact be rejected, but by those Arguments that would overthrow the *whole Truth* of all History, or ruin the Credit of every Matter of Fact, for which we have not the immediate Testimony of our Senses; and consequently put a final End to all human Society and Correspondence.

Hitherto, because its Genuineness is keenly debated among learned Men, I have not mentioned that famous Testimony of *Josephus* concerning *Jesus Christ*. However, since I am, myself, pretty much satisfied as to its Truth, or that it is the genuine Production of *Josephus*, and since Mr. *Daubuz*, in his excellent Book on that Subject, has set its Genuineness in so strong a Light, stronger than could have been expected, sufficient, I really think, to satisfy any reasonable Man, I cannot but indulge myself the Pleasure here to transcribe it. And this notable Testimony from *Josephus*, who was co-temporary with the *Apostles*, is thus, “About that Time, “*says he*, appeared *Jesus*, who was a wise Man, if “one can call him a Man; for he was a Worker “of Miracles, and instructing those who delight in “Truth, gained many Disciples both among *Jews* “and *Gentiles*. This was *Christ*. And however, at “the Instigation of the chief Men among us, *Pilate* “condemned him to be crucified, yet the Devoti- “on of his Followers did not fail: For, on the “third Day, he again appeared to them alive; the “holy *Prophets* having published those and many “other wonderful Things concerning him; and, to “this Day, the Sect of *Christians*, so called from “him, is still subsisting †.” This is Evidence ve-  
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† Archæol. lib. 18. cap. 4.

ry strong, intirely in Point, and its Pointedness seems to be the Cause that raises the Suspicion in Peoples Breasts, that it is the Forgery of some *unworthy Christian*. But, when one considers the Connection, which *Josephus* very well knew, *John Baptist*, and *St. James*, one of the Writers of the *New Testament*, had with *Jesus Christ*, and how very honourably he makes Mention of both these Persons, one needs not much wonder at the Fulness of this Testimony; nor can one well imagine what else, in Consequence of his extream good Opinion about the *Forerunner*, and the *Disciple*, and *Brother of Christ*, one could have expected from him. But, as to this, the Reader may believe as he pleases. Without any Regard to this Testimony, I have briefly explained the Reasons upon which one cannot but admit the Truth of the History of the *Gospel*. And it appears, that those very Facts mentioned by *Josephus*, are by *Heathen Writers*, either expressly confessed, or allowed to have been reported by the *Apostles*: So that therein *Josephus* only testifies what we are informed of from *Tacitus*, *Celsus*, *Julian*, and other Enemies of the *Christian Institution*.

Before I conclude this Article, I must observe, That the *Evangelical History* is supported by the Testimony of another Set of Men, whose Evidence seems to be more valuable than that of those other *Heathens* hitherto mentioned. There is no Shadow of Reason to suspect, that *Tacitus*, *Pliny*, or any other *Pagan Author*, would tell a known Falshood, or forge any Point of History to the Advantage of the *Christian Institution*. But 'tis very possible for People to be in such Circumstances, wherein their Belief, and Confession of Facts, may arise from a far more *penetrating Conviction*. Thus, if, upon the  
Truth

Truth of certain Facts, a Man deliberately ventures the Forfeiture of all his present Enjoyments, and runs the Hazard of being involved in all the Calamities of Life ; what other Construction can be put on this Conduct, but that the Man, if he be not quite out of his Senses, is fully apprised of the Importance of those Facts, and, at the Bottom of his Soul, is irresistibly convinced of their Reality, by the most over-bearing Evidence? To be sure, the Evidence upon which a wise Man acts, will always be proportional to the Stake he ventures. *Now*, this was the Case of those *Heathens*, who left the Religion of their Country, wherein they had been educated, and embraced the Profession of *Christianity*. Nor was it the Multitude only that acted this Part, but Men of *Learning* and *Philosophy*, whose main Business was to search after Truth, and the Design of whose Studies was to perceive Things as they are in themselves, and to form a Judgment of them upon rational Evidence. And what stronger Testimony can one have, or desire to have, than from the Mouths of Persons of good Sense and Learning, *whose* Education, and Course of Life, set them in direct Opposition to the Influence of those Facts they attest ; *who* came not to be convinced of their Certainty, but upon their own deliberate Re-searches, and *who*, in assuring the Truth of them, are so far from serving any present Interest, that thereby they expose themselves to Contempt and Hatred, to Poverty, to every Evil of Life, to Death itself? Of such Witnesses I might instance in a great many, but I shall only mention the following.

*Quadratus*, a learned *Heathen*, having embraced the *Christian* Religion, so zealous was he in its Propagation, that he travelled through the World for that

Purpose. When it was persecuted, he durst avow it, he wrote in its Defence, and presented his *Apology* to the Emperor *Adrian*: (as *Aristides* did one of his too about the same Time, another learned Man, fam'd for his Philosophy at *Athens*, who had likewise left *Paganism*, and gone over to *Christianity*.) Of this *Apology* of *Quadratus* there only now remains a small Fragment in *Eusebius*, wherein the Author expresses himself thus, “As to the Works, *says he*, of  
 “our Saviour, they were of a lasting Nature; for  
 “they were real and true: Such as Persons healed  
 “of their Diseases, and raised from the dead, who  
 “appeared and were seen, not only at the Time  
 “of their being healed and raised, but long afterwards, during the Time our Saviour was upon  
 “Earth, nay, for a considerable Time after his Departure; so that some of them *were living in our*  
 “Days \*.”

Next to *Quadratus* I shall mention *Justin Martyr*, well known in the *Christian* World. This Philosopher flourished in the two Reigns after *Adrian*; and so great was his Passion for Truth, that, in Search of it, he carefully sifted all the several Opinions of the different Sects of Philosophers; Nor could his Mind any where take up its Rest, or be fully satisfied, till he came to the Knowledge of the *Christian* Religion, which he heartily embraced, and in Defence of which he wrote several very excellent Pieces. In his *first Apology*, wherein he argues for the divine Original of *Christianity*, he lets us know, that *Baptism*, the *Eucharist*, and the *first Day* of the Week, were religiously observed among *Christians*; that, before *Baptism*, it was the Practice to make  
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\* *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. 4. cap. 3. Vid. lib. 3. cap. 37.*



open Profession of one's Belief of the Truth of the *Gospel*, and solemnly to engage to live according to its Laws: *That*, in the *Eucharist*, he who presided, offered up, in the Name of the *Son*, and through the *Holy Ghost*, Praises and Thanksgivings to the *Father of all*, for those his Blessings, therein commemorating the Passion of *Jesus Christ*: And *that* they assembled together on the *first Day* of the Week, in order to celebrate the Memory of *Christ's Resurrection*†: These, among other Things left us by *Justin Martyr*, are noble Monuments of the Practice of the primitive *Christians*: And still, in our Day, at the Distance of 1600 Years, are these religious Rites, after the same Manner, yet understood and observed.

The third *Heathen* Philosopher I mention, *who turned Christian*, is *Athenagoras the Athenian*. This Philosopher had at first so very unfavourable an Opinion about *Christianity*, that, in order to prevent its Success in the World, he entered into a Design to write against it. In the Execution, however, of this Design, he was not so weak, or so dishonest, as to fetch his Objections from *uncertain Fame*, or the common Reports that went about to the Disadvantage of *Christians*; but minding to manage his Argument with greater Justice, and to better Purpose, he applied himself to the Reading of the *Scriptures*, upon which the *Christian Faith* is founded. And thus *Athenagoras*, putting himself in the Way to acquire a just Understanding of Things, his Examination prov'd so successful, as to lead him to perceive the Truth of the *Gospel*; upon which he altered his Opinions quite, and the keen *Antagonist* was changed into a zealous *Assertor* of the *Christian Cause*. So, that instead of  
writing

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† Just. Mart. 1 Apol. p. 93, 94, 97, 98, 99.

writing against *Christianity*, as he at first intended, this Philosopher composed a fine *Apology* in Defence of its *Professors*, and offered it to *M. Antoninus* and his Son *Commodus*, wherein he particularly complains, as *Justin Martyr* had done before him, that *the Name of Christian*, without any other Crime, was judged a sufficient Ground of Punishment. \* And whereas the Doctrine of the *Resurrection* from the Dead, was a strong Bar to the Reception of the *Gospel* among the learned *Heathen*; he likewise wrote an excellent little *Treatise* upon that Subject, and therein shows the Possibility, the Fitness, and Justice of such an Event.

These now, besides a great many others that might be named, are *Witnesses* for the History of the *Gospel*, successively co-temporary with one another from the Days of the *Apostles*, as far down as near the End of the *second Century*, against whom no possible Exception can be taken. They believed the Truth of the *Gospel*; — but they did not believe till they were engaged by proper Evidence: — Upon this Evidence they changed their Religion, the last Thing a sober Man will quit withal; — and the Faith, to which, by this Evidence, they were converted, they professed in the Face of mortal Dangers. I do not here pretend to alledge, they had good Reason to lay such Stress upon the Matters of Fact related in the *Gospel*, as from thence to conclude the *Divinity* of the *Christian Religion*: I only mean to say, *That* of the Truth of those Facts they were thoroughly convinced. And when Men of Sense and Learning are found to attest the Truth of Facts, which they did not believe till after having narrowly examined

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\* *Legat. pro Christian. sub. Init.*

examined them, and in attesting of which they are extremely conscious they expose themselves to the severest Treatment; if such Testimony shall be rejected, I know not what Sort of Evidence among Mankind can be depended on. In the present Case, it is true, one may call it the Testimony of Friends; but one must likewise recollect, it is of Friends who immediately before were Enemies, and whose Friendship was gained only by the bare Force of naked Truth; which, one should think, is an Evidence, of all other, the strongest and most convincing; especially, when one considers, that in the Service of this Truth, however contradictory to their former Sentiments, our *rational Converts* are now willing to share the greatest Dangers. And indeed, to imagine, that such Men as *Quadratus, Justin, Athenagoras*, would stake all their Comfort here, and all their Happiness hereafter, upon a *Matter of Fact* not thoroughly canvassed and examined, or upon a Falshood, either contrived by themselves, or forged by other People, is beyond measure senseless and extravagant, and would reduce the universal Practice of Mankind, in relying on moral Evidence, or human Testimony, to be the greatest Absurdity in Nature. Let me therefore hope, the Reader will have no Difficulty in allowing, that the *Testimony* of those *Heathens* who turned *Christian*, is at least a strong collateral Proof for the *History* of our *Saviour*; and, that taking it along with the *Testimony* of those other *Heathens*, who still continued in their *Infidelity*, there can be, in the World, no Matters of Fact better attested, than are those recorded in the *Gospel*.

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