

A
COURSE OF LECTURES,
CONTAINING
A DESCRIPTION AND SYSTEMATIC ARRANGEMENT
OF THE
SEVERAL BRANCHES OF DIVINITY:

ACCOMPANIED WITH
AN ACCOUNT BOTH OF THE PRINCIPAL AUTHORS,
AND OF THE PROGRESS, WHICH HAS BEEN MADE AT
DIFFERENT PERIODS,

IN
Theological Learning.

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PART VI.
On the Credibility of the New Testament.

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LECTURE XXVII.



THE Authenticity of the New Testament having been established in the Lectures, which I gave on a former occasion, I now enter on a subject of equal importance, the Credibility of the New Testament. The two subjects, though closely connected, are in themselves distinct. The question of authorship is one thing: the question of truth is another. As a history may be true, though the author is unknown, so the authorship may be certain, and yet the history be doubtful. From the fact, that a book, ascribed to an ancient author, is *justly* ascribed to him, we cannot argue to the truth of its contents without intermediate links in the chain of our reasoning. And, though the process, by which we go from the first to the second, is in some cases easier, than in others, it is in all cases necessary to establish the latter by a separate and independent proof.

The meaning of the term 'authentic', as used in these Lectures, has been already explained

on a former occasion, and may be easily inferred from the observations, which have just been made. But to remove all danger of mistake, in regard to a word which is variously used, I will again explain the different applications of it, and again assign the reason for preferring that sense, which is here ascribed to it. While some writers use the term 'authentic' as synonymous with 'genuine', there are other writers, who distinguish the terms, by using the epithet 'genuine' for books written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, and applying the term 'authentic' in those cases only, where such books are likewise entitled to credit. When the term 'authentic' is used in this latter sense, it would be tautology to speak of authenticity *and* credibility: for authenticity then *includes* credibility. We must then speak of books, as being genuine and credible; which comes to the same thing, as if we called them authentic and credible, when the terms in question are used as synonymous. Now every author, when a word is used in different senses, may adopt that, which he himself prefers, provided he gives a previous definition, and throughout the course of his reasoning *adheres* to that definition. But experience has shewn, that when the term authentic is professedly used in the *compound* sense of 'genuine and credible', men sometimes

forget this definition in the progress of their argument. When a book has been proved to be genuine, and therefore authentic in the sense of those who use the terms as synonymous, the argument may be pursued by others, who use the term 'authentic' in its compound sense. Hence the error may arise, that a book, which had been proved to be only genuine, is considered as a book, which had been proved to be both genuine and credible.

But no such confusion can arise if the term authentic is used in its plain and simple sense, as denoting nothing more, than that the book, to which we apply this epithet, was written by the person to whom it is ascribed. For this reason it is so used in these Lectures. In so using it, we are exempt from the danger of including more in the term, than the argument will allow. In every stage of our reasoning we shall be aware, that when the proof of Authenticity is ended, Credibility still remains to be proved.

In arguing on the books of the New Testament, the transition from Authenticity to Credibility, appears at first sight to be much easier, than when we argue about other books. In

regard to common books, however satisfactory the proof of authorship may be, there still may be room to doubt, whether the author is entitled to credit. But such doubts are excluded, when we know that the author was divinely inspired. Since then the Apostles and Evangelists wrote under the influence of divine inspiration, it seems to follow as a thing of course, that the writings ascribed to them are worthy of credit, as soon as we have shewn, that those writings are *justly* ascribed to them. Indeed the argument might be rendered still easier : we might with equal reason omit the proof of authenticity altogether. We might *begin* with the proposition, that the New Testament was divinely inspired : and then we should come *at once* to the conclusion of its credibility, without even moving the question, by whom the several books of it were written.

But this mode of reasoning, though it recommends itself by its great convenience, and has therefore not unfrequently been adopted, is attended with the same defect, as an attempt to prove a proposition in geometry by means of another proposition, which is itself dependent on the proposition to which we apply it. That all Scripture was written by inspiration is perfectly true. But we must *prove* the fact, before we

can *appeal* to it. And that proof can be obtained by no other means, than by arguments drawn from the New Testament itself ; arguments therefore which imply, that the New Testament is true. If therefore while we are *conducting* the proof, that the New Testament is true, we argue from a proposition, which is *dependent* on that truth, we prove premises by inferences as well as inferences by premises. That is, we prove nothing whatever.

The Credibility therefore of the New Testament must be established independently of its inspiration, or it cannot be established at all. But established it *may* be, and established on principles, superior to every objection.

The arguments for the Credibility of the New Testament may be referred to two general heads. We may argue from the character and situation of the writers to the credibility of their writings : or we may argue from the contents of the writings themselves. Now independently of divine inspiration, the character and situation of the persons, who wrote the several books of the New Testament afford a strong presumption that their record is true. And this presumption will be raised to positive proof, when we have considered the argu-

ments in detail. Equally convincing shall we find the arguments, which are drawn from the writings themselves; whether we compare the several parts of each single book, or compare one book with another, or compare the whole with other works of acknowledged credit. For the sake of perspicuity we must arrange the various arguments under their respective heads. And those, which are deduced from the character and situation of the writers, are entitled to our first consideration.

But before we can *apply* those arguments to the New Testament, it will be necessary to institute an inquiry, on the result of which the propriety of such application must entirely depend. When, for instance, we argue from the character and situation of St. John to the Credibility of his writings, we argue on the presumption, that the Gospel and the Epistles which we *now* possess as the works of St. John, are the *same* works with those, which were written by the Apostle. But ancient writings, which have descended to us in manuscript, must have been exposed to the danger of alterations, as well designed as accidental, to interpolations as well as to omissions. And such alterations *may* have been, unless we can prove the contrary, committed to an extent, that the original work, under the hands of tran-

scribers, has gradually assumed a totally new form. Now it is evident, that when we argue from the character of a writer to the credibility of his writings, the argument can apply only to what was written by himself. And if the interpolations or alterations have been numerous, they may prevent the application of the argument altogether. That we may be enabled therefore to apply the argument to the books of the New Testament, we must previously shew, that the books, which we now possess, as works of Apostles and Evangelists, are the *same* books, as those which were composed by Apostles and Evangelists. In other words, to the proof of the Authenticity of the New Testament we must add the proof of its Integrity.

But in the conduct of this proof we must not be expected to give more, than the nature of the subject admits. When the term 'Integrity' is applied to the New Testament, we must not understand it in so strict a sense, as if this Integrity could not be established, without a proof, that we have at present copies of the Greek Testament, which are in *every word* the same with the autographs of the sacred writers. We must not confound the notion of *integrity* with the notion of a *perfect text*. We may establish the

former, though we may fail in establishing the latter.

No one, who is acquainted with the criticism of the Greek Testament, will contend, that among the Greek manuscripts, which we now possess, there is *any one* which contains either the Gospels or the Epistles precisely in the *same words*, from the beginning to the end, which were used by the writers themselves. In the multiplicity of readings only *one* can be the genuine reading; and this genuine reading may be contained, sometimes in one copy, sometimes in another. We must collect therefore from *all*, and by the rules of criticism determine, which among the various readings has the strongest claim. But in this critical employment there will always be room for diversity of opinion: and from the imperfection of human judgement, we shall never attain an unerring result. Our endeavours therefore to form a copy of the Greek Testament, in which there shall be *no* deviation from the autographs of the sacred writers, in other words, our endeavours to form a *perfect text* of the Greek Testament can never be entirely successful. We may approximate, and we *have* approximated as nearly to a perfect text, as under all circumstances can be justly expected. But something will ever

be wanting to render the coincidence complete between the autographs and the best of copies, which we can form at present.

Widely different is the conclusion to which we shall come, when we argue for the general *Integrity* of the New Testament; namely, when the term is used in that sense, in which alone it is necessary to use it, for the purpose of establishing the *Credibility* of the New Testament. If the *facts* originally recorded, and the *doctrines* originally delivered in the New Testament, are the same in the existing copies, we have all the integrity which is wanted to make the New Testament the basis of our faith and morals. Though the criticism therefore of the Greek Testament is on various accounts a matter of high importance, and has accordingly been treated as a primary branch of theology, we must not suffer the imperfections, to which all human exertions are exposed, to influence our reasoning upon subjects, to which those imperfections do not apply. That Integrity, which is necessary to establish Credibility, does not depend on a variation of words, if there is no variation in the sense. It will be sufficient therefore, if we can prove, that the New Testament has descended to us, *upon the whole*, in the same state, in which it was originally

written; and that we may justly confide in every thing which relates to facts and to doctrines. The remaining part of this Lecture therefore shall be employed in the proof of such Integrity.

In the first place we may observe, that a general corruption of the sacred text was in itself impracticable. If one party was inclined, either to omit what opposed their peculiar tenets, or to insert what might afford them additional support, there was always some other party, both ready and willing to detect the fraud. And even if they persevered in altering their *own* manuscripts, they had not the power of altering the manuscripts in the hands of their opponents. Though the corruption therefore might be partial, it could not become general. Nor must we forget that the books, which compose the Greek Testament, have been transcribed, beyond all comparison, more frequently than the works of any other Greek author. And it is evident that the difficulty of corrupting the Greek manuscripts must have increased with every increase in their number. Though it cannot be denied, therefore, that there is stronger temptation to alter a work, which relates to doctrines, than to alter a work, which relates to matters indifferent, the impedi-

ments to the alteration of the Greek manuscripts were still more powerful than the temptation. The Gospels, which were written in different places, and the Epistles, which were addressed to different communities, were multiplied in copies, dispersed in Palestine and Egypt, in Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. Under such circumstances a general corruption of the Greek manuscripts was a thing impossible. For it could not have been effected without a union of sentiment, which never existed, nor without a general combination, which could not have been formed, before Christianity had received a civil establishment. But if such a combination had been practicable, it could not have been carried into effect, without becoming a matter of general notoriety. And ecclesiastical historians are *silent* on such a combination. The *silence* of history is indeed no argument against the truth of a fact established by induction, if the fact was such that it could not be generally known. But the silence of history is important in reference to a fact, which if it ever existed, *must* have been a subject of general notoriety. Whatever corruptions therefore may have taken place in the Greek manuscripts, those corruptions must have been confined to a few, and could not, by any possibility, have been extended to them all.

The impediments to a general corruption were further augmented by the ancient versions of the New Testament, which in general accord as to facts and doctrines with the Greek manuscripts. If therefore the *Greek* manuscripts could have been generally corrupted, it is quite incomprehensible how such corruptions could have been diffused among all the manuscripts of all the ancient versions, which were dispersed throughout the Roman empire; the Syriac, and Armenian in Asia, the Coptic, the Sahidic, and Ethiopic in Eastern Africa, to which we must add the ancient manuscripts of the Latin version, dispersed over Italy, Gaul, and Western Africa. Nor are the impediments already enumerated the sole impediments to a general corruption. It must have extended also to the quotations from the Greek Testament, which are contained in the voluminous writings of the Greek Fathers. The mutual and general check, therefore, which was afforded by the joint operation of manuscripts, fathers, and versions, must have preserved to us the New Testament in the same state, upon the whole, which was given to it by the writers themselves.

But there is another argument, in favour of the position, that the manuscripts of the Greek

Testament have descended to us without any material alteration, either in facts or in doctrines. The Greek manuscripts, which we now possess, were received, not through any channel, which came from the ancient heretics, but from the orthodox members of the ancient Greek Church. And this Church maintained the doctrine of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of the Atonement, and other leading articles of the Christian faith, in common with the Church to which we ourselves belong. And though the Greek Church could not guard against those accidental mistakes, which unavoidably arise from a multiplication of written copies, we have sufficient reason to believe, that the ancient Greek Church abstained, with the most scrupulous and conscientious exactness, from every wilful corruption of the sacred text. We cannot have a stronger proof of this assertion, than the conduct of the ancient Greek Church, in regard to the seventh verse in the fifth chapter of St. John's first Epistle. That verse, which is wanting in the most *ancient* manuscripts even of the *Latin* version, and was no more known to Augustin, than it was to Chrysostom, was gradually introduced into the Latin Vulgate by the Church of Rome. But it was never admitted by the ancient Greek Church. Not a single *Greek* manuscript was ever known to contain the

passage, till after the invention of printing : and that solitary manuscript, which *does* contain it, was certainly not written in Greece.¹ Now the conduct of the ancient Greek church, in regard to that memorable passage, shews its conscientious regard for the purity of the sacred text. And hence we may safely conclude, that the manuscripts of the New Testament, which we have received from that Church, have descended to us untainted by wilful corruptions, either in matters of fact, or in matters of doctrine.

I am aware indeed, that this argument, and not only *this* argument, but *every* argument for the Integrity of the New Testament, which has been used in this Lecture, must fall at once to the ground, if it be true, that the passage in question proceeded from the pen of St. John. If that passage existed in Greek manuscripts

¹ By Erasmus it was called Codex Britannicus, from the country where it was found, and where it was probably written. Having belonged to one Froy, a Franciscan Friar, it came many years afterwards into the hands of Dr. Montfort, whence it acquired the name of Codex Montfortianus. Of Dr. Montfort the MS. was purchased by Archbishop Usher, with whose other MSS. it was removed to Trinity College, Dublin, whence it is now called the Dublin MS.—The Codex Ravianus, which used to be quoted with the Codex Montfortianus, has been abandoned since the discovery, that it is a copy of a printed edition.

anterior to those which have descended to the present age, and was expunged by adversaries of the doctrine which it contains, the extinction of the passage must have been *universal*. It must have affected the manuscripts in the hands of the orthodox, no less than the manuscripts belonging to the heretics. It must have equally affected the manuscripts of the ancient versions. It must have equally affected the quotations of the Greek Fathers, who quote the sixth and eighth verses in *succession*, without the words which begin with *ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ* and end with *ἐν τῇ γῆ*.² Now if it was really possible, that such corruption could in spite of every impediment be thus generally extended, what becomes of all the arguments, which have been employed in this Lecture to prove the general Integrity of the New Testament? Those arguments are founded on the supposed impossibility of doing that, which *must*

² Bengelii Appar. Crit. p. 458, edd. 2^{da}. Wetstenii Libelli ad Crisin. N. T. ed. Semler, p. 91: and the Note of Matthäi to 1 John v. 7. When the Greek Fathers quote the words of the 8th verse with the words that precede it, they quote in the following manner. Οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνου, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ὕδατι, καὶ τῷ αἵματι· καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστι τὸ μαρτυροῦν ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια· ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα· καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι. In this passage there is consistency of reasoning: and certainly no insertion is wanted, to improve the text of St. John.

have been done, if the passage in question *originally* existed in Greek manuscripts.

If it be true in regard to that passage, that the ancient Greek manuscripts, which have descended to the present age, with the works of the ancient Greek Fathers, and the manuscripts of the ancient versions, the oldest of the Latin version not excepted, have descended to us in a mutilated state, there is an end to that security, which is derived from their mutual agreement, for the Integrity of the New Testament in all other places. And we are brought at length into this dilemma : either to relinquish a part, or abandon the whole.³

Whether the passage be genuine, or not, the doctrine of the Trinity stands, in either case, unshaken. For the sake therefore of the passage itself, I should think it unnecessary to make another remark on it. But if the defence of that passage requires the sacrifice of a principle, without which we cannot maintain the *general* Integrity of the New Testament, it then behoves us to

³ I am here speaking in reference to the common printed editions. For 1 John v. 7. is *no* part of the Greek Original, as represented by the Greek MSS. and the Greek Fathers.

inquire, whether the passage *deserves* to be maintained, and maintained at so great a price.

Though every Library in Europe has been searched for Greek manuscripts containing the Catholic Epistles, there is only *one* Greek manuscript in which the passage has been found: and this solitary manuscript, as will presently appear, has no pretension to be numbered among the *ancient* Greek manuscripts. As *all* other Greek manuscripts, which are now extant, are destitute of the passage, it is of less importance to know the precise number of those which have been quoted by *name*, especially as they do not constitute the whole number. They amount however to not less than ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-TWO. The Greek Fathers have *never* quoted the passage, which they certainly would have done, if it had existed in *their* manuscripts. Now the manuscripts which were used by Irenæus and Clement of Alexandria, could not have been written later than the *second* century. The manuscripts used by Origen, could not have been written later than the *third* century. The manuscripts used by the Greek Fathers, who attended the Nicene Council, could not have been written later than the *fourth* century. In this manner we may prove that the Greek manuscripts in *every* century were destitute.

of the passage, till we come to the period when the oldest of our *existing* manuscripts were written. Further, the passage is wanting, not only in the manuscripts of all other ancient versions,⁴ beside the Latin: it is wanting also in the most ancient manuscripts of the Latin version itself. Latin manuscripts, which have not the passage in the text, are still preserved to the amount of more than fifty.⁵ Some of them indeed have the passage in the margin, added by a later hand; but it is the reading of the *text*, which constitutes the reading of the *manuscript*. And as the oldest Latin manuscripts were destitute of the passage, so it was never *quoted* by the Latin Fathers during the four first centuries.⁶

4. I designedly use the expression '*manuscripts of all other ancient versions*': for it has been inserted in *printed* editions of the Syriac and Armenian Versions in opposition to the Syriac and Armenian *manuscripts*. See Preface to my Letters to Archdeacon Travis, Notes 8, 9, 10, 11.

5. Forty was the number of which I gave an account in the 13th Note of the Preface to my Letters to Archdeacon Travis, which were published in 1795. But it appears from Griesbach's last edition, published in 1806, that many more Latin MSS. have been discovered, which have not the passage in the text.

6. An exception has been claimed for Cyprian, who lived in the middle of the third century. Now there is really no pretext for saying that Cyprian *quoted* 1 John v. 7. The utmost that *can* be said is, that he *referred* to it: and it will presently appear, that even in *so* saying we should be mistaken. The words of Cyprian, in his Treatise De Unitate Ecclesie,

At the *end* of the fourth century, the celebrated Latin Father Augustin, who wrote ten Treatises on the first Epistle of St. John, in all of which we seek in vain for the *seventh* verse of the fifth chapter, was induced in his controversy with Maximin to compose a gloss upon the eighth verse. Augustin gives it professedly as a gloss upon the words of the eighth verse, and shews by his own reasoning that the seventh verse did not then exist.⁷ The high cha-

on which so much stress has been laid, are as follows. Dicit Dominus, Ego et Pater unum sumus. Et iterum de Patre et Filio, et Spiritu sancto, scriptum est: Et hi tres unum sunt. The passage is so worded in Bishop Pearson's edition, Tom. I. p. 109. but *manuscripts* of Cyprian have tres unum sunt, without hi.—The first quotation which Cyprian has here made is, Ego et Pater unum sumus, which is taken from John x. 30. His second quotation is hi tres unum sunt, or as manuscripts have it, tres unum sunt. For the words 'de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto scriptum est' are Cyprian's *own* words, and can in no sense be called a *quotation*. Since then the words which Cyprian has *quoted* from the place in question are not only words of the *eighth* verse, but are quoted by *Augustin* from the eighth verse, as will presently appear, the quotation of those words alone is no proof that they were taken from the seventh verse. But the final clause of the eighth verse relates to spiritus, aqua, et sanguis; whereas Cyprian declares, that the tres unum sunt, which *he* has quoted, was written de Patre, et Filio, et Spiritu sancto. Could Cyprian have argued thus if he had quoted from the eighth verse? Undoubtedly he might, as will appear from the following Note.

7. Augustin in his Treatise Contra Maximinum Arianum, lib.

racter of Augustin in the Latin Church soon gave celebrity to his gloss ; and in a short time it was

lib. ii. cap. 22, (Tom. VIII. col. 725, ed. Benedict.) thus quotes the words of the eighth verse, 'Tres sunt testes, spiritus, et aqua, et sanguis ; et tres unum sunt.' He then makes various remarks on the words, spiritus, aqua, sanguis, and proceeds thus. Si vero ea, quæ his *significata* sunt velimus inquireæ, non absurde occurrit ipsa Trinitas, quæ unus, solus, verus, summus est Deus, Pater et Filius, et Spiritus sanctus, de quibus verissime *dici potuit*, 'Tres sunt testes et tres unum sunt' : ut nomine spiritûs *significatum* accipiamus Deum Patrem—nomine autem sanguinis Filium—et nomine aquæ Spiritum sanctum. The gloss which Augustin here puts on the eighth verse, very clearly shews, that he knew nothing of the seventh verse, which appears also from the fact that he has never quoted that verse. Facundus, another African Bishop, to whom the seventh verse was still unknown, quotes the eighth verse at full length (lib. i. cap. 3, p. 14, ed. Sirmond.), and then gives the gloss which Augustin had made on it. For after the words spiritus, aqua, et sanguis, et hi tres unum sunt, he thus delivers what he supposes to be St. John's *meaning* : in spiritu *significans* Patrem,—in aqua vero Spiritum sanctum *significans*—in sanguine vero Filium *significans*. Let us now consider the *terms*, which are employed by Augustin and Facundus, when they state their interpretation of the eighth verse. Augustin having observed, that if we inquire into the *meaning* of spiritus, aqua et sanguis, the Trinity itself not unaptly occurs, as consisting of three persons, immediately adds, de quibus verissime *dici potuit*, 'Tres sunt testes, et tres unum sunt.' Facundus, instead of *dici potuit*, says plainly *dicit*. He says, that St. John in the eighth verse *speaks* of the Trinity. His own words are, Joannes Apostolus in Epistola sua de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto *sic dicit*. He then quotes the whole of the *eighth* verse, but not a syllable of the seventh. Now when Facundus says that St. John in the eighth verse *speaks* of the Trinity, he uses the same kind of language, which Cyprian had used, who in quoting tres unum sunt (which Augustin quotes from
the

generally adopted. It appeared indeed under different forms ; but it was still the gloss of Augustin, though variously modified. The gloss having once obtained credit in the Latin Church, the possessors of Latin manuscripts began to note it in the margin, by the side of the eighth verse.

the eighth verse) says that it was *written* of the Trinity: de Patre, et Filio, et Spiritu sancto, *scriptum est*. The *SCRIPTVM EST* of Cyprian is not at all stronger than the *DICIT* of Facundus. It can make no difference in this case, whether we say *scriptum est*, or *dictum est*. Yet Facundus was expressly commenting on the *eighth* verse. Consequently we are not warranted to conclude that Cyprian meant the seventh verse. And it is really incredible that the seventh verse should have existed and have been known to Cyprian, and yet have remained unknown (as it certainly did) to Augustin. But all doubts on this question have been long since removed by Facundus himself, in the very chapter where he quotes the eighth verse. In confirmation of the gloss upon that verse, he appeals to the authority of Cyprian, and says that Cyprian *understands* those words of the Trinity, namely, the words spiritus, aqua, et sanguis. Facundus having quoted spiritus, aqua, et sanguis, et hi tres unum sunt, a second time in the same chapter, and having observed that some men refused to understand these words of the Trinity, immediately adds, quod tamen Joannis Apostoli Testimonium B. Cyprianus, Carthaginensis antistes et martyr,—de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto dictum *intelligit*. Ait enim, ‘Dicit Dominus, Ego et Pater unum sumus; et iterum de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto scriptum est, Et hi tres unum sunt’. Here then Facundus declares, not only that Cyprian *understands* the eighth verse of the Trinity, but in support of his assertion appeals to that very passage in the works of Cyprian, which in modern times has been taken for a proof, that Cyprian was speaking of the seventh verse.

Hence the oldest of those Latin manuscripts, which have the passage in the margin, have it in a different hand from that of the text. In later manuscripts we find margin and text in the same hand; for transcribers did not venture immediately to move it into the *body* of the text, though in some manuscripts it is *interlined*, but interlined by a later hand. After the eighth century the insertion became general. For Latin manuscripts written *after* that period have generally, though not always, the passage in the body of the text. Further, when the seventh verse made its first appearance in the Latin manuscripts, it appeared in as many different forms, as there were forms to the gloss upon the eighth verse.⁸ And though it now *precedes* the eighth verse, it *followed* the eighth verse, at its first insertion, as a gloss would naturally follow the text, upon which it was made.⁹ It is not therefore matter of mere conjecture, that the seventh verse originated in a Latin gloss upon the eighth

8. The various forms, in which the seventh verse made its first appearance in the Latin MSS. may be seen on consulting the notes of Erasmus, Mill, and Sabatier to 1 John v. 7: Simon Hist. des Versions, chap. ix. and Porson's 6th Letter.

9. Bengelii Appar. Crit. p. 467. ed. 2^{da}. It is so placed also by Vigilius Tapsensis, who quotes thus. Tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in terra, aqua, sanguis, et caro; et tres in nobis sunt: et tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in cœlo Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus sanctus, et hi tres unum sunt.

verse: it is an historical fact, supported by evidence, which cannot be resisted.

But many centuries elapsed before the passage was exhibited in Greek. The first Greek writer who has given it, is Manuel Calecas, who lived as late as the *fourteenth* century. And we need not wonder at finding the passage in *his* works, as Calecas was a convert to the Church of Rome. In the fifteenth century the passage was quoted by Bryennius, who was likewise so attached to the Church of Rome, that he quoted *other* readings of the Vulgate which are not found in the Greek manuscripts.¹⁰

At length, in the sixteenth century a *Greek manuscript* of the New Testament appeared with 1 John v. 7. Its original appellation was Codex Britannicus: but it is now called the Dublin manuscript.¹¹ It made its first appearance about the year 1520: and that the manuscript had just been written, when it first appeared, is highly probable, because it appeared at a critical juncture, and its appearance answered a particular

10. See the above quoted Preface, p. 17.

11. That the Dublin MS. is the same with the Codex Britannicus is proved in my Notes to the second volume of Michaelis' Introduction, under the article Codex Montfortianus.

purpose.¹² But whether written for the occasion or not, it could not have been written *very long* before the sixteenth century. For this manuscript has the Latin Chapters, though the κεφαλαια of Eusebius are likewise noted. Now the *Latin* Chapters were foreign to the usage of the *Greek* Church, before the introduction of printed editions, in which the Latin Chapters were adopted, as well for the Greek as for the Latin Testament. Whatever Greek manuscripts therefore were written with Latin Chapters, were written in the *West* of Europe, where the Latin Chapters were in use. They were written by the Greeks, or by the descendants of those Greeks, who fled into the West of Europe, after the taking of

12. Erasmus had published two editions of the Greek Testament, one in 1516, the other in 1519, both of which were without the words, that begin with ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ and end with ἐν τῇ γῆ. This *omission* as it was called by those who paid more deference to the Latin translation than to the Greek original, exposed Erasmus to much censure, though in fact the complaint was for *non-addition*. Erasmus therefore very properly answered, addendi de meo quod Græcis deest, provinciam non susceperam. He promised however, that, though he could not insert in a Greek edition what he had never found in a Greek manuscript, he would insert the passage in his next edition, if in the mean time a Greek MS. could be discovered, which had the passage. In less than a year after that declaration, Erasmus was informed, that there was a Greek MS. in England, which contained the passage. At the same time a copy of the passage, as contained in that MS. was communicated to Erasmus: and Erasmus, as he had promised, inserted that copy in his next edition, which was published in 1522.

Constantinople, and who then began to divide their manuscripts according to the usage of the country, in which they fixed their abode.¹³ The Dublin manuscript therefore, if not written for the purpose to which it was applied in the third edition of Erasmus,¹⁴ could hardly have been written more than fifty years before. And how widely those critics have erred in their conjectures, who have supposed that it was written so early as the twelfth century, appears from the fact, that the Latin Chapters were not *invented* till the thirteenth century.¹⁵ But the influence of the Church of Rome in the composition of the Dublin manuscript, is most conspicuous in the *text* of that manuscript, which is a servile imitation of the Latin Vulgate.

13. There are three Greek manuscripts with the Latin Chapters in our University Library, marked Hh. 6. 12. Kk. 5. 35. and Ll. 2. 13. That which is marked Ll. 2. 13. and is evidently the oldest of the three, was written at Paris, by Jerom of Sparta, for the use and at the expence of a person called Bodet, as appears from the subscription to it. Now Jerom of Sparta died at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

14. The third edition of Erasmus has 1 John v. 7. *precisely* in the words of the Dublin MS.

15. They were invented by Hugo de S. Caro, who died in 1262. The precise year, in which he divided the text of the Latin Vulgate into its present Chapters is not known. But as it appears from the Preface to the Cologne edition of his works, that he composed his Concordance about the year 1248, and his division of the Vulgate into the present Chapters was connected with that Concordance, it could not have been done

It will be sufficient to mention how it follows the Vulgate at the place in question. It not only agrees with the Vulgate, in the insertion of the seventh verse: it follows the Vulgate also at the end of the sixth verse, having *χριστός*, where all other Greek manuscripts have *πνεῦμα*: and in the eighth verse it omits the final clause, which had *never* been omitted in the Greek manuscripts, and was not omitted even in the *Latin* manuscripts before the thirteenth century.¹⁶ Such is the character of that solitary manuscript, which is opposed to the united evidence of all former manuscripts, including the Codex Vaticanus, and the Codex Alexandrinus.

It has been already observed, that when the passage first appeared in Latin, it appeared under various forms, though it subsequently acquired the permanent form, which it now retains in the Latin Vulgate. It appeared also under various forms, when first exhibited in Greek. The Dublin manuscript gives it in one form: Calecas and Bryennius in other forms: the Greek translation of the Acta Concilii Lateranensis again in another form.¹⁷ And the differences are exactly such as might be expected in different Greek translations

16. Here there is an additional proof, respecting the age of the Dublin MS.

of the same Latin original. Nor had it acquired a settled form, when introduced in our printed editions. The Complutensian editors gave it in one form: Erasmus in another form: Robert Stephens again in another form. Such is the origin and progress of that celebrated passage, which men of learning and talent have taken for the genuine production of St. John.

It is true, that in the opinion of some critics internal evidence may be discovered in this passage, which they think sufficient to overturn the external evidence. Now internal evidence may shew, that a passage is *spurious*, though external evidence is in its favour; for instance, if it contains allusions to things which did not exist in the time of the reputed author. But no internal evidence can prove a passage to be *genuine*, when external evidence is decidedly against it. A spurious passage may be fitted to the context, as well as a genuine passage. No arguments therefore from internal evidence, however ingenious they may appear, can outweigh the mass of external evidence, which applies to the case in question.¹⁸

18. One of the arguments from internal evidence is, that $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\ \gamma\eta$ in the eighth verse implies that something had preceded with $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\ \omicron\upsilon\pi\alpha\nu\phi$. But they who argue in this manner forget, that $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\ \gamma\eta$ is wanting in the Greek MSS. as well as $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\ \omicron\upsilon\pi\alpha\nu\phi$. Also in the oldest Latin MSS. the eighth

The sacrifice therefore of that principle, by which we defend the *general* Integrity of the New Testament, is a sacrifice to which the passage is not entitled. That important principle therefore remains unshaken: and the general Integrity of the New Testament is liable to no objection. That principle has been rescued from the danger, to which many incautious friends of Christianity have exposed it, by endeavouring inadvertently to defend a part at the expence of the whole.


But if any thing were still wanted to shew the justness of the reasoning which has been adopted in this Lecture, we might appeal to actual experience. If the Greek manuscripts had undergone any material alterations, the facts and doctrines of the New Testament, as represented by the Greek Fathers, would not have accorded, as they do, with the present state of those manuscripts. And still less would those manuscripts accord as they do, with the words, which are quoted by Irenæus, and Clement of Alexandria, from Greek manuscripts, which could not have been written much later than the middle of the second century.

eighth verse is equally destitute of in terra, which was inserted for the very purpose of having something to correspond with in cælo, and shews how well the several parts of the interpolation have been fitted to each other.

It is true, that though the Greek manuscripts quoted by these ancient Fathers, could not have been written *much* later than the middle of the second century, they *may* have been of no earlier date. So far therefore, as we are enabled to institute an actual comparison, the proof of Integrity, which is founded on this comparison, carries us no higher, than the middle of the second century. Consequently, *this* proof, though very satisfactory as far as it goes, still leaves the Greek manuscripts exposed to the charge of corruption, in the interval which elapsed, between the age of the Apostles, and the middle of the second century. And this is precisely the period, which the adversaries of Christianity have assigned for their corruption. But here that important principle, which has been already defended, comes again to our assistance, and enables us to maintain the Integrity of the Greek manuscripts, where all other arguments would fail. Both the Gospels and the Epistles were originally delivered into the hands of those, who were *friends* of the Apostles and Evangelists. *Such* persons cannot be suspected of having wilfully corrupted the copies entrusted to their care. On the contrary, they must have been anxious to preserve those sacred records in their original purity. When transcripts had been multiplied, and some of them had fallen into the

hands of their adversaries, their anxiety to preserve the purity of those records, must have increased with every attempt to corrupt them. Let it be granted therefore that such attempts were made; and let us see, what must have been the consequence. The adversaries of the Christian faith, as it is taught in the Sacred Writings, may have endeavoured to rid themselves of passages, which opposed their peculiar tenets. And they *may* have had recourse to the desperate remedy of expunging such passages from their own manuscripts. But if they did so, they themselves must have known, that it *was* a desperate attempt. They could not imagine that the extinction of a passage in *their* manuscripts would operate as a sort of magic on the manuscripts possessed by their opponents. When Tertullian accused Marcion of having corrupted the text of St. Luke, can any one imagine that Tertullian was so absurd, as to introduce those corruptions into his *own* manuscripts? Since then we have received our manuscripts of the Greek Testament, not from the ancient heretics, but from the hands of the orthodox, our manuscripts of the Greek Testament must stand acquitted of the charge of having perpetuated corruptions introduced by adversaries of the orthodox faith.

Having thus vindicated the Integrity of the New Testament, I shall proceed in the next Lecture to the proof of its Credibility.



LECTURE XXVIII.



THE Integrity of the New Testament having been established in the last Lecture, we are now warranted to argue from the character of the writers to the Credibility of their writings. If we inquire into the character of the persons, who wrote the books of the New Testament, we shall find, that independently of their inspiration, which will be proved hereafter, when that branch of Theology can be *consistently* introduced, they possessed every qualification, which can be required of a writer, to make his writings *worthy* of credit. Let us begin with the historic books, the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles: and in the first place let us consider the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John.

There are not *many* historians, who have themselves been witnesses of the events, on which they have written: and we are in general satisfied, if an historian does but faithfully repeat the information, which he has obtained from others.

Such histories are often written many centuries after the period of the events themselves ; yet if the materials of those histories are drawn from creditable sources, we do not withhold our assent to them. But St. Matthew and St. John were from the beginning both eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word. They not only saw and heard what was done and said by our Saviour : they themselves bore a part in the transactions which they have recorded.

It is true, that a writer may profess to record what he has seen and heard, profess to record even things in which he himself has borne a part, and yet that writer *may* produce a narrative, which is altogether fictitious. But though the thing is possible, we can in no case argue, that an apparently serious history is destitute of truth, unless we can shew, either that the writer had some *motive* to impose upon his readers, or that he himself was so weak and credulous as to be unable to distinguish truth from falsehood, or that the facts themselves are of that description, that no evidence can be sufficient to warrant our assent to them. The two first questions will be considered in the present Lecture, which relate to the character and situation of the sacred writers. And that the facts recorded, as well those which are

miraculous, as those which are of ordinary occurrence, are not incredible in themselves, will appear from the two next Lectures.

In the first place therefore let us ask, whether the Apostles *could* have any motive to deception in the propagation of the Christian Religion. The object of an impostor is always some advantage to *himself*. He deceives others, for the very purpose of turning their deception to his own account, whether the object which he contemplates, be the promotion of his profit, or of his power, or of his fame. But these are objects, which could not be contemplated by the Apostles. They sacrificed every earthly advantage to the cause, in which they were engaged. They forsook all, to follow their Lord and Master. It is true, that they fled from him, when he was conducted to the tribunal, which condemned him to death; whether influenced by personal fear, or by momentary doubts on the divine authority of a person, thus *apparently* abandoned by that Almighty Being, in whose name he had professed to act. But St. John, his beloved disciple, returned and followed him to the cross. Nor did the other Apostles, with the exception of the apostate Judas, withdraw themselves from the sacred cause. When Christ was risen from the dead, he again found the eleven gathered

together at Jerusalem, whither they returned after the ascension, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

The *sincerity* therefore of the Apostles rests on a foundation, which no argument can shake. Nor did they merely renounce all worldly *advantages*. They submitted to *persecutions*, such as no man would endure, except from a firm conviction, that he was propagating nothing but the truth. Nor were the sufferings, which they underwent, accidental or unforeseen. When the Founder of the new religion had suffered death upon the cross, his disciples could hardly expect to propagate that religion, without danger to themselves. Indeed they had been previously warned of the impending danger. If they have persecuted me (said our Saviour) they will also persecute you. Yet the Apostles persevered against all opposition, which was made both by Jews and by Gentiles. And they were prepared to sacrifice their lives, rather than abandon the cause, in which they were engaged.

In thus appealing to the sufferings, endured in the first instance by Christ himself, and then by his faithful disciples, I appeal to facts, which are not recorded in the New Testament alone.

That Christ himself suffered death under Pontius Pilate is recorded by Tacitus¹; and the same historian records the sufferings, which were endured by the early Christians. Similar testimony is given by his contemporary Suetonius². But it is almost unnecessary to produce *any* evidence for the persecution of the primitive Christians, when they were unavoidably exposed to it by the cause in which they were engaged. A religion directly opposed to the prejudices, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, could not fail to draw on the early professors of it persecution, torture, and death. And the fortitude, with which they endured their sufferings, sufferings which nothing could have *induced*, or have *enabled* them to bear, but a firm conviction that they were suffering for the truth, is attested by the same Roman historians, who have recorded their persecutions. It is true, that even the Apostles did not all of them suffer martyrdom. Of the two Apostolic historians, St. Matthew and St. John, it is certain that St. John died a natural death, and it is uncertain whether the report of St. Matthew's martyrdom be true. But if men are *prepared* to suffer persecution even unto death, in attestation of the facts, which they record, and of the doctrines, which they maintain, their sincerity is suf-

1. Annal. XV. 44.

2. Claud. cap. 25. Nero, cap. 16.

ficiently proved, even though the punishment of death does not actually follow.

Having shewn that the Apostolic historians could have no motive to impose upon their readers, we may in the next place consider, whether it is credible, that they were deceived themselves. The facts, which they have recorded, and of which they themselves were witnesses, were of that description, that nothing more was wanted than the use of their senses to determine, whether such events really happened or not. It is true that even the external organs of sense *may* be so obscured by superstition or fanaticism, that men may fancy they have seen, or heard, what was presented to their imaginations by some artful contrivance. But when a writer records either the dreams of his own fancy, or the delusions which others have imposed on him, his fanaticism will always be *apparent*. Far different are the characters of St. Matthew and St. John. The simplicity, the sobriety, and the dignity, with which they relate their story, are qualities the reverse of those, which mark the fanatic. Nor did the Apostles exhibit in their *conduct* any signs of fanaticism. Their zeal was tempered with discretion; their firmness was attended with calmness; in their devotion to

the sacred cause they forgot not the rules of common prudence ; though prepared to sacrifice their lives, when the sacrifice was wanted, they courted not the death of the martyr from vanity or ostentation. Such men were no enthusiasts ; such men were no fanatics ; such men therefore are worthy of credit, when they relate what they themselves believe, when they relate what they profess to have seen and heard. Are they suspected of credulity, their own conduct will acquit them. They doubted especially the truth of the Resurrection, till they were convinced by the actual presence of Christ himself. On that occasion our Saviour *upbraided* them with their unbelief, because they believed not them, who had seen him after he was risen. But so much the more reason have *we* to believe in the testimony of the Apostles, to believe in the testimony of those, who withheld their *own* assent, till the fact was established by the evidence of their own senses.

From the *character* of the Apostolic historians, let us proceed to their *situation and circumstances*. St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in that very country, to which the history relates. And though we cannot now determine the precise year, when it was written, it was unques-

tionably written at a time when hundreds and thousands were still living in Judæa, who must have remembered the period, assigned for the ministry of Christ. Now a writer, who wishes to impose on his readers a fabulous story as a true one, can have no prospect of success, unless he withdraws his story from the scrutiny of his readers, either by remoteness of time, or by distance of place. It would be a desperate effort, if an historian attempted to make his readers believe, that certain events had happened in the very place where they lived, and at a time which they could well remember, unless those events had really happened at the time, and in the place assigned. To make such an attempt with a fabricated story could never enter into the mind of any man, however ignorant, or absurd. But this would have been precisely the situation of St. Matthew with respect to his original readers, if he had attempted to impose on them a fabulous story. We are reduced therefore to this dilemma. Either the history is true: or a fraud was committed, which was morally impossible. -

The Gospel of St. John, though not written in Judæa, and written later than the Gospel of St. Matthew, was still written under circumstances, which must have exposed it to detection,

if the narrative had been false. Whether, as is most probable, it was written at Ephesus, or at some other place of Asia Minor, it was written in a country, which abounded with Jews, who had synagogues in all the principal cities. And they were no less interested than their brethren of Judæa, in every thing which related to the history of that person, who was the founder of a religion, intended to supersede the religion of Moses. They must have been anxious to obtain the most correct information concerning that extraordinary person: and they had sufficient opportunities of obtaining such information, in the annual journies to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover. And unless we suppose, that St. John deferred the writing of his Gospel to extreme old age, a supposition improbable in itself, and inconsistent with the character of his Gospel, there *might* have been, and probably *were* among his immediate readers, persons, who were present with him at the crucifixion. But whether personally present, or not, they had ample *means* of knowing, whether the narrative of St. John was entitled to credit. And that it *is* entitled to credit, the Jews themselves, as well unbelievers, as believers, have shewn by their own conduct. The Jews, who embraced Christianity in the Apostolic age, gave *positive* proof of their belief in the

Gospel history. And even they who rejected Christianity, have at least *indirectly* borne testimony in its favour. It nowhere appears that they regarded the Gospel history as a fable: it nowhere appears, that they rejected even the miracles, though they evaded the inference, that Jesus was a Teacher sent from God, by contending that those miracles were no proof of *divine* interposition, as the same things could be done by the agency of evil spirits. Now if they had been able to deny the facts themselves, their rejection of Christianity would have rested upon much firmer ground, than that on which they were contented to rest it. Nor does it appear, that the Jews ever made an attempt to invalidate the facts, when the Gospels had been written. The first Apostolic historian was not confuted by the Hebrew Jews: the other Apostolic historian was not confuted by the Greek Jews. If such a confutation had ever been written, it could not have been lost and forgotten. For though hundreds and thousands of ancient records have perished, either when the use of them was superseded by other writings, or when their value was unknown, or when forcible means were employed for their destruction; none of these causes could have operated, in regard either to a Hebrew or to a Greek manuscript, containing a confutation of

the Gospel history by the Jews of the first century. Such a document must have been cherished by the Jews of all succeeding generations: the copies of it would have been so multiplied, as to have rendered the extinction of it by the Christians a matter impossible: and even if the attempt had been made, that attempt would have been recorded by the Jews, as an acknowledgement of weakness on the part of the Christians. We may conclude therefore, that though the Gospel of St. John was written under circumstances, which, had it contained deviations from the truth, must have led to a detection of them, no such detection was ever made. And as the Jews of Asia Minor, as well as the Jews of Judæa, must have been both able and willing to detect every falshood, which the Gospel of St. John might have contained, we may justly conclude, that there were no falshoods to be detected.

Whether we argue therefore from the character of the Apostolic historians, or argue from their situation and the circumstances under which they wrote, we find sufficient guarantee for the truth of their Gospels. They recorded what they themselves had seen and heard: they had no motive to deceive their readers: nor could they be deceived themselves. Their situation and circum-

stances afford us additional security ; and prove that their record is true, because it could not have been false, without detection and exposure.

Let us now proceed to the two Evangelists, who were *not* Apostles. St. Luke was eye-witness to a considerable part of the transactions, which he has recorded of St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles. But it does not appear, that either St. Luke or St. Mark were eye-witnesses of the facts, which they have recorded in their Gospels. Indeed we must conclude from the manner, in which St. Luke has expressed himself in the Preface to his Gospel, that his perfect understanding of the things, which he has related, was not the result of his own observation. And though it is not impossible, that St. Mark had been present at *some* of the transactions which he has recorded, there is no evidence, that he was. The twelve Apostles are the only persons, of whom we know, that they were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word from the beginning.

But, if St. Mark and St. Luke did not write from their *own* knowledge, their sources of information were the best, which an historian can have, who derives his information from others. It is

evident, from St. Luke's Preface, that his knowledge of the facts, which he has recorded in his Gospel, was derived from information communicated by the Apostles. The same source of information must have been equally open to St. Mark : for one of the twelve Apostles was his friend and companion. The Credibility therefore of the Gospels, which were written by St. Mark and St. Luke, though it rests on a different foundation from the Credibility of the other two, still rests on a foundation which is perfectly secure.

In estimating the Credibility of their Gospels, there are two subjects of special enquiry. The first of them regards the *materials* of their Gospels : the second of them regards the mode, in which those materials were *employed*.

With respect to the materials, or the information itself, the first question, which occurs, is ; In what *manner* was that information conveyed ? Was it conveyed by the Apostles in *writing*, or was it conveyed in *verbal conversation* ? In one of these two ways the information *must* have been conveyed, for conveyed it certainly was : but in which of them, neither the Evangelists themselves, nor any other writer has declared to us. It is a case

therefore, in which we are left to argue from induction. History is silent in regard to any *written* document communicated by the Apostles to St. Mark and St. Luke: history is equally silent in regard to the fact, that the information was merely *verbal*. If the silence of history therefore is conclusive against the former, it is equally conclusive against the latter; and consequently proves, that the Apostles communicated to St. Mark and St. Luke no information *whatever*. The objection therefore involves an absurdity, and is consequently void of foundation. The notion, that a written document, if it ever existed, could not have been lost, is destitute of truth for this plain and obvious reason. When St. Mark and St. Luke had finished their Gospels, the *materials* which they had employed in the composition of them were no longer *wanted*. And if those materials were written in the native language of the Apostles, which we *must suppose* them to have been, St. Mark and St. Luke would have understood them, as appears from the Hebraisms of their Gospels, but those materials would have appeared as a foreign jargon, either at Ephesus, or at Corinth, or at Rome. There was no motive therefore to the preservation of such a document, when the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke were already written. The question

whether St. Mark and St. Luke had *written* information, or only *verbal* information, is a question, which as history is silent in regard to *both* parts of the alternative, must be decided by induction alone. And here we must be guided by the question, which of the two suppositions will best explain what it is *necessary* to explain. It would be foreign to the present Lecture to renew the discussions which have taken place upon this question. I will merely observe therefore, that the conclusion to which I came after an elaborate inquiry, is that which is best adapted to the Credibility of their Gospels. A communication in *writing* is unquestionably more secure than a communication by *words*.

But are St. Mark and St. Luke *independent* historians, if each of them employed a written document? Now it is really difficult to comprehend, how their independence, if destroyed by *written* information, could have been secured by *verbal* information. They were dependent in *either* case; in either case *equally* dependent. They can in *no* case be considered as independent historians, in *that* sense, in which St. Matthew and St. John were independent historians. They cannot be called independent *witnesses*, like St. Matthew and St. John: for St. Mark and St.

Luke have recorded the testimony of others. In reference to the events themselves, they were necessarily dependent on the Apostles. The only independence which we *can* ascribe to St. Mark and St. Luke, is independence in reference to each other. And this independence is in no respect affected by the supposition of a written document; according to that form, in which I have ever maintained it.

It is well known that the verbal harmony, of the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke with that of St. Matthew was formerly explained on the supposition, that the succeeding Evangelists copied from the preceding. This supposition, though formerly entertained by the most eminent Divines, either makes St. Luke dependent on St. Mark, if St. Mark's Gospel was first written, or St. Mark dependent on St. Luke, if St. Luke's Gospel was first written. To secure therefore that independence, which alone can be attributed to St. Mark and St. Luke, namely, independence with respect to each other, I ascribe that verbal harmony, not to the authors themselves, but to the Greek translator of St. Matthew's Hebrew Gospel. The verbal harmony which is observed in the Greek Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, lies chiefly in the Gospels of St.

Mark and St. Luke, when compared with that of St. Matthew. The Greek text of St. Matthew is found to accord with the Greek text of St. Mark, so frequently, so closely, and in such long continued periods, that such periods *could not* have been written without the intervention of *some* harmonizing cause. The verbal harmony between the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke is no less remarkable. But there is a circumstance attending that harmony, which had escaped the notice of preceding writers. By an analysis of the three first Gospels, I discovered, that the verbal harmony between the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke was of that peculiar kind, that the former did not harmonize with the latter alone, except in those portions of their Gospels, where St. Mark had no matter in common with St. Matthew. This observation suggested the thought, that such verbal harmony would have been occasioned, if the Greek translator of St. Matthew's Hebrew Gospel had recourse for assistance to the Gospel of St. Mark, where St. Mark had matter in common with St. Matthew, but that in those portions of St. Matthew's Gospel, where St. Luke *only* had matter in common with St. Matthew, the translator had recourse to St. Luke. It is true, that all this is mere supposition. But it must be tried like every other supposition,

by its ability, or its inability to explain existing effects. If the Greek translator of St. Matthew's Hebrew Gospel *did* act, as I *suppose* him to have acted, he would have produced the effects, which *were* produced. Conversely therefore we may argue from the real existence of the effects to the probable existence of the cause assigned. And if this conclusion be right, St. Mark and St. Luke are proved to be independent historians, as far as independence can be ascribed to them.³

Is their *veracity* impeached, the answer is that the 'Veracity of the Evangelists' has no possible

3. The writers, who have objected to my mode of explaining the verbal harmony of St. Mark and St. Luke with St. Matthew, have entirely *mistaken* the cause which I assigned. The only cause, which I assigned for that verbal harmony, is that which I have just explained. The supposition of a written document, communicated by the Apostles to St. Mark and St. Luke, as stated in my Dissertation on the three first Gospels, was made *solely* for the purpose of explaining the *matter*, which St. Mark and St. Luke have in common with St. Matthew. And throughout the whole of the Dissertation the supposed document was *never* applied to the explanation of verbal harmony. On the contrary, there is a chapter, in which I expressly shew, that the supposition of a written document will *not* account for the verbal harmony. It is therefore the more extraordinary, that so many writers should have represented me as explaining the verbal harmony by a cause, which I myself have shewn to be *inadequate* to that purpose. But it is not a singular case, that when *one* objector has made a mistake, others follow him, without reading the book, on which he animadvert.

connexion either with the materials of their Gospels, or with the mode in which those materials were conveyed. To estimate the *veracity* of an historian we must inquire, not how he *obtained* his materials, but how he *employed* them. And that St. Mark and St. Luke employed their materials faithfully will presently appear.

We have already seen, that St. Mark and St. Luke, though not *witnesses* to the transactions, which they have recorded, derived their information from those, who were. We have seen, that if the conclusion is right, in regard to a *written* communication, they received their information in that manner, which was the most *secure*. And we have further seen, that if the verbal harmony of their Gospels with that of St. Matthew, was owing to that cause, which has been shewn to be highly probable, they are historians, who wrote independently of each other.⁴


4. Another attempt having been made to explain the verbal harmony of the three first Gospels by a supposition, which also implies that St. Mark and St. Luke wrote independently of each other, it is proper that I should mention it, especially as it has met with approbation. According to this hypothesis the verbal harmony of the three first Gospels is explained in the following manner. The Apostles remembered the words,

The first of the two questions, respecting the Credibility of their Gospels has now received a satisfactory answer. The *materials* of which St. Mark and St. Luke composed their Gospels have been shewn to be of that description, that we can argue to the Credibility of their Gospels, as far as we can argue from materials, without con-

as well as the substance of our Saviour's Discourses: and in conversing with each other about the past events, a repetition of the same thing produced gradually a repetition of it in the same words. If then St. Matthew used the words, which he himself remembered, and St. Mark and St. Luke used the words, which were communicated to them by the Apostles, the verbal harmony might have been produced, which we now find. This is certainly the most favourable manner in which the hypothesis can be proposed. But in whatever form it be proposed, it is incapable of explaining *any* harmony in Greek Gospels, unless it is coupled with another supposition, which is contradicted by the Evangelists themselves. If Christ, in his intercourse with the Apostles, and the Apostles in their intercourse with each other, used the language in which they were educated, namely, the language of Galilee, it is clear that no repetition in *Syriac* could have produced a verbal harmony in *Greek*. Now it appears from the exclamation on the cross, and from many other expressions, recorded by the Evangelists, that the language of our Saviour was a dialect of the *Syriac*. And that the twelve Apostles, who were men of Galilee, used likewise the dialect of that country, which was somewhat different from the dialect of Jerusalem, though understood there, appears from the remarks which were made on the dialect of St. Peter. Since then it is evident that the hypothesis cannot explain *any* verbal harmony in Greek Gospels, it is unnecessary to shew (what might easily be done) that it would fail to account for the *peculiarities* of the verbal harmony.

sidering the mode of employing them. We must now therefore enter on the second question, which if likewise answered satisfactorily, will place the Credibility of their Gospels on the firmest foundation. But this question is so easily answered, that no long inquiry is necessary for that purpose. That St. Mark and St. Luke employed with *fidelity* the materials, which they obtained with *certainty*, is proved by the same arguments, from which we infer, that the Apostolic historians employed their materials with fidelity. The sincerity of the Evangelists, who were not Apostles, is proved in the same manner, as the sincerity of the Apostles themselves. St. Mark encountered the same dangers with St. Peter; St. Luke the same dangers with St. Paul. The arguments, which shew that St. Matthew and St. John were not liable to be deceived, apply also to St. Mark and St. Luke. If the Apostles were not deceived, neither could St. Mark and St. Luke be deceived: for their knowledge was derived from the Apostles. Lastly, their situation and the circumstances under which they wrote, are again guarantees for the truth of their Gospels; and for reasons similar to those, which have been already explained, in reference to the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John.

Having thus argued from the character and situation of the sacred historians to the Credibility of their writings, I shall proceed in the next Lecture to consider what additional evidence may be obtained from the writings themselves.



LECTURE XXIX.



IN estimating the Credibility of the facts, recorded in the New Testament, from a consideration of the facts themselves, we must distinguish those, which are miraculous from those, which are not so. For though the miracles recorded in the New Testament admit of satisfactory proof, the evidence, which is necessary to prove the reality of a miracle, must in all cases be stronger, than the evidence which would be merely sufficient to command our assent, in regard to facts of ordinary occurrence. The present Lecture therefore will relate to facts in general, without adverting to miracles in particular. And the Credibility of the miracles shall be distinctly considered in the next Lecture.

It is hardly necessary to produce an argument for the position, that the ordinary events recorded in the New Testament are not incredible in

themselves. They are, without exception, events which *might* have happened under the circumstances assigned. Most of them are such as might be *expected* to happen under the circumstances assigned. And many of them are such as, under those circumstances, could *hardly fail* to have happened.

Let us proceed therefore to institute the comparison, which was proposed in the last Lecture. Now there are three ways, in which this comparison may be conducted. We may compare the several parts of each single book: or we may compare one book with another: or we may compare the whole with other works of acknowledged credit.

If we estimate the Credibility of the Gospels by considering them singly, we shall find that each of them is consistent throughout; that each of them contains a plain and unaffected narrative, of which the several parts have a perfect agreement. In each of the Gospels the several parts contribute to one and the same object; nor do we any where find examples of incongruity or incoherence. So far therefore as we can judge from the contents of each single Gospel, we must pronounce them to be worthy of credit.

If we compare the Gospels with each other, we shall find, that they derive Credibility from their mutual support. The Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke are similar both in matter, and in manner. Indeed these three Gospels have *so* much matter in common, that when we have deducted what each of these three Evangelists has peculiar to himself, the matter which remains common to all three, constitutes one uniform Narrative of our Saviour's ministry, from his baptism to his death and resurrection. Hence originated the supposition, that such a Narrative once existed in a *separate* form; that it was a Narrative, to which the Apostles, as eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, had contributed *generally*; that the additions to it in St. Matthew's Gospel, were the additional suggestions of his own observation, while the additions to it in the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, were additional suggestions from St. Peter and other Apostles. This is the mode, in which I have represented the supposition of such a written document.

It would be foreign to the present Lecture to repeat the arguments, which have been alleged in its favour. But as the supposition itself is connected with the Credibility of the Gospels,

and the object of the supposition has been greatly misunderstood, it is necessary to explain the *real* object. That the Narrative of our Saviour's ministry, which constitutes the common matter of our three first Gospels, had previously existed in a *separate* form, is a supposition which accounts not for any *verbal* harmony. The harmony, which it explains, is the harmony in the common *matter* of the three first Gospels. And there are some things of this description, which can be explained on *no other* supposition, unless we abandon the notion that St. Mark and St. Luke wrote independently of each other. It will be sufficient to mention a single case.

In that Narrative of our Saviour's ministry, which constitutes the common matter of the three first Gospels, the principal facts of that Narrative though *contained* in the three Gospels, are not contained in them according to the same *arrangement*. But St. Mark and St. Luke invariably *agree* in their arrangement, even in regard to facts, which are differently arranged by St. Matthew. Now this agreement on the part of St. Mark and St. Luke, even where St. Matthew has a different arrangement, must be explained, either on the supposition, that they drew their materials from a common document,

and uniformly adhered to the *order* of that document: or it must be explained on the supposition, that one copied from the other. But this latter supposition destroys *entirely* the notion, that St. Mark and St. Luke, were independent historians. Whether they had *written* information from the Apostles, or had only *verbal* information, they were dependent on the Apostles for their information, as much in the latter case, as in the former. Their independence therefore as historians can be only in reference to each other. But even *this* independence is taken from them, by the supposition that one *copied* from the other. Nor is this supposition objectionable on that ground alone. It has been shewn by *other* arguments, by arguments not easily confuted, that the succeeding Evangelists did *not* transcribe from the preceding. There is no other mode therefore of accounting for that harmony of *arrangement* in the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, than the supposition of a written communication, and their *adherence* to the order of it.

Now a faithful adherence, on the part of St. Mark and St. Luke to a written communication from the Apostles, is an argument for the Credibility of their Gospels. And as St. Matthew

has recorded the same facts, though in a different order, there is additional apostolic authority for the truth of the facts themselves. And the facts, which St. Mark and St. Luke have in common with St. Matthew constitute the chief portion of their Gospels.

Let us now consider the matter which each of these three Gospels has peculiar to itself. The additions, which were made by St. Matthew rest generally on the same authority, with the matter which is common to all three. With the exception of the two first Chapters, they were all within the limits of his own experience. And he had sufficient opportunity of learning, from Joseph and Mary, who were the best possible witnesses, the truth of the circumstances, which attended the birth of our Saviour, the flight into Egypt, and the settlement at Nazareth. The matter which is peculiar to St. Luke's Gospel, rests again on the same authority as the other parts of his Gospel, with the exception of the two first Chapters. The appeal in his Preface to those who were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word from the beginning, embraces every transaction which is included in the ministry of Christ. And from the intercourse of St. Luke at Jerusalem, with those, who must have remembered

what related to Zacharias and Elizabeth, to the birth of John the Baptist, and the birth of Christ at Bethlehem, he had ample means of information respecting the events, which he has recorded in his two first Chapters. The matter, which St. Mark's Gospel has peculiar to itself, both might have been, and probably *was*, supplied by his intercourse with St. Peter. But the matter peculiar to St. Mark's Gospel consists in the notice of additional circumstances attending the principal facts. For there is hardly a principal fact recorded in the Gospel of St. Mark, which is not contained, either in the Gospel of St. Matthew, or in the Gospel of St. Luke.

The three first Gospels therefore corroborate each other, and the argument from the character of the writers to the Credibility of their writings is confirmed by a consideration of the facts themselves.

The Gospel of St. John has comparatively little matter in common with the other three : and the matter which it has in common is chiefly contained in the four last Chapters. St. John, the beloved disciple of our Saviour, who was on all occasions admitted to the most familiar intercourse, who was present at the crucifixion, and

who from that hour took Mary the mother of Jesus to his own home, appears to have more fully understood the *divine* nature of his Master, than either St. Matthew, St. Mark, or St. Luke. In the Gospel therefore of St. John the *divine* nature of our Saviour is explained more clearly, than in the three first Gospels. This knowledge of the divine nature St. John had undoubtedly obtained from our Saviour himself in that familiar intercourse, with which he was especially honoured. But there is no inconsistency between the accounts of St. John, and the accounts of the other Evangelists. The veracity of historians cannot be impeached by the mere circumstance that they have taken different views of the same subject. The most faithful biographers, if they write independently of each other, will give different representations of the same person, according to the views which they have respectively taken. But if they contradict not each other in regard to the matter which they have in common, and are consistent with themselves in the views, which they have respectively taken, their writings have all the marks of honesty and truth.

Before I conclude the comparison of our Gospels with each other, it is necessary to take

some general notice of the alleged contradictions, though it would be impossible in a single Lecture, to go through the various objections in detail. The examples, which have been alleged of supposed contradiction, relate to a variation in the *circumstances* attending the same principal facts. But objections of this kind though very specious, are not very solid. When the same fact is reported by different persons, the relation of the main fact is frequently, if not *commonly*, attended by some variation in the circumstances. Either circumstances are remembered by one reporter, which were not remembered by another: or if equally remembered they may not appear equally important: or one circumstance may be adapted to excite interest in one set of readers, while another circumstance is better adapted to excite interest in another set of readers. A variation therefore in the circumstances attendant on a principal fact can never amount to a contradiction, unless it can be shewn, that the different circumstances are of that description, that if one of them be true, the other must be false.

There are no two Evangelists, which have a closer agreement in the main facts, which are common to both, than St. Mark, and St. Luke.

Yet St. Mark in recording the same facts with St. Luke, has frequently recorded them with the addition of circumstances unnoticed by St. Luke. On the other hand, St. Luke has sometimes added a circumstance unnoticed by St. Mark. But if one historian has any where *more* than the other, he does not therefore *contradict* the other. If indeed St. Mark and St. Luke had each of them augmented their narrative of the same fact, with the addition not only of different but of *incompatible* circumstances, then indeed their accounts would vary in a manner, which would amount to a real contradiction. But the addition of such *incompatible* circumstances, by these Evangelists is not a matter which can be easily proved.

That portion of the Gospel History, in which the adversaries of Christianity have taken the greatest pains to discover contradictions, is the history of the Resurrection, which is recorded by all four Evangelists. But in the same proportion as ingenuity has been displayed in the attack on that important history, in that same proportion have the friends of Christianity displayed talent and learning in its defence. We have many excellent vindications of that important history: but there is none, which lies in a

shorter compass, and at the same time is more satisfactory, than Bishop Sherlock's Trial of the Witnesses.

And after all, if it were possible to produce *real* contradictions, they would not destroy the *general* truth of the Gospel history. Nor could the truth even of any *particular fact* be invalidated by such a variation in the circumstances. The inference might affect the circumstances; but not the fact itself. Indeed the Credibility of our Gospels is so *little* affected by the existing variations, that they operate as arguments in its favour. They shew that the Gospels contain no cunningly devised fable: they shew that the Evangelists did not concert among themselves a story for the deception of mankind. If such had been their design, they would have taken care to avoid even the *appearance* of a variation in their accounts. But when four historians write a history of the same person, and (whatever be the sources from which they draw their materials) write independently of *each other*, there is no guarantee, either for the veracity of the writers, or for the Credibility of their writings, which can exempt them, without the intervention of a miracle, from variations of that description, which we find in the four Gospels. Consequently such

variations cannot affect the *Credibility* of the Gospels.

Let us now proceed to the Acts of the Apostles. This book must obviously be compared with the Epistles of St. Paul. For it contains an account of the Christian Communities, to which those Epistles were addressed, and describes the intercourse of St. Paul with the persons, to whom he wrote. That St. Paul was the author of the Epistles ascribed to him, and that Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles, has been already proved in the Lectures, which relate to the Authenticity of the New Testament. The present comparison is instituted for the purpose of shewing that the Acts of the Apostles contain a *true* history. Now the allusions in the Epistles of St. Paul to facts and circumstances recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, afford ample proof, that those facts and circumstances are true. If an *historian* may attempt to deceive his readers by fabulous accounts of things reported to have happened at a *distance*, the writer of an Epistle, to whomsoever it might be addressed, could not possibly make his readers believe, that things had been done among them, which never *had* been done. The allusions therefore in St. Paul's Epistles to facts and circumstances recorded in the

Acts of the Apostles, are unanswerable proofs, that those facts and circumstances are true. It would be absurd to suppose, that there was a collusion between the writer of the history and the writer of the Epistles, for the purpose of giving credit to the history. Such a collusion (as appears from the preceding argument) would have been impracticable. Besides, if those allusions had been made for the *purpose* of giving credit to the history, they would have been made more *pointedly*; they would have been made in such a manner, that every one might *perceive* the connexion between the narrative and the allusions. Otherwise their object, if made for such a purpose, would have been defeated. But the allusions in the Epistles of St. Paul, though always found to *accord* with the narrative, as soon as they are observed, are more frequently concealed, than apparent. They are not forced upon the notice of the reader, because the introduction of them resulted not from art or design. They are mere incidental allusions, suggested by the matter of the Epistles themselves. They contain no reference, direct or indirect, to any narrative, in which the reader might find the facts and circumstances recorded. When *such* allusions therefore are compared with the narrative, and are found to agree with it in every particular, we have indis-

putable proof, that the facts and circumstances are true.

The books of the New Testament having been compared with each other, we may now compare them with other works of acknowledged credit. There is no writer to whom we can more effectually appeal, than to the Jewish historian, Josephus. When we appeal to Josephus, in confirmation of facts recorded by the sacred historians, we appeal to a writer, who could have no *design* to corroborate their accounts. The subject matter of Josephus has no visible connexion with the subject matter of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The passages in the former, which illustrate passages in the latter, have not been collected without much industry and careful research. Nor are the examples of agreement confined to facts, which might be *generally* known. The conformity extends also to matters so minute, that unless those matters were true, such conformity could not have existed. If they had been *fabricated* by the Evangelists, either Josephus would not have known them, or he would not on their sole authority have recorded them. An agreement in writers, who are not only unconnected with each other, but who write for different purposes, and are even *opposed* to each other

in their religious opinions, is inexplicable on any other supposition, than that they agree in recording the truth. And since writers of this description cannot *often* have opportunities of adverting to the same things, we may fairly conclude from their agreement where such opportunities *are* offered, that the same accuracy exists also in other places, where we cannot apply a similar proof.

It is an argument unfair and unwarranted, when the adversaries of Christianity contend, that the *silence* of Josephus on any fact recorded in the Gospels is a reason for our disbelieving it. A fact may be known to one historian, and yet be unknown to another; or if known to him, it may not suit the purport of his history to record it. Indeed the views and motives of one historian may be so much at variance with the views and motives of another historian, that the one may feel an interest in *suppressing* what the other feels an interest in *recording*. Now this was precisely the situation of a writer who rejected Christianity, when compared with the situation of those, who were recording the acts of Christ and his Apostles.

The examples of agreement between Josephus

and the Evangelists, which have already been given in a former Lecture¹, to prove the Authenticity of the New Testament, may be equally well applied to the proof of its Credibility. The same undesigned coincidence, in regard to facts, not generally known, or incidentally mentioned, which prove that the writings are genuine, prove also that the writings are true.

Similar confirmation may be obtained from the testimonies of heathen authors. But as we have already an ample collection of such Testimonies², it will be sufficient to add one other example. In the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, ver. 9, St. Luke speaks of a synagogue at Jerusalem, belonging to a class of persons, whom he calls *Λιβερτινοι*, a term which is evidently the same with the Latin *Libertini*. Now whatever meaning we affix to this word (for it is variously explained); whether we understand emancipated slaves, or the sons of emancipated slaves, they must have been the slaves, or the sons of slaves to *Roman* masters. Otherwise the Latin term *Libertini* would not apply to them.

1. Lecture XXVI.

2. See Lardner's Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion.

That among persons of this description there were many at *Rome*, who professed the Jewish religion, whether slaves of Jewish origin, or proselytes after manumission, is nothing very extraordinary: But that they should have been so numerous at *Jerusalem*, as to have a synagogue in that city, built for their particular use, appears at least to be more than might have been expected. Some commentators therefore have supposed that the term in question, instead of denoting emancipated Roman slaves, or the sons of such persons, was an adjective belonging to the name of some city or district; while others, on mere conjecture, have proposed to alter the term itself. But the whole difficulty is removed by a passage in the second book of the *Annals of Tacitus*³. From that passage it appears, that the persons whom Tacitus describes as being *libertini generis*, and infected, as he calls it, with the Jewish superstition, were so numerous at Rome in the time of Tiberius, that four thousand of them were sent to the island of Sardinia, and that all the rest of them were ordered, either to renounce their religion, or to depart from Italy before a day appointed. We can now therefore *account* for the number of *Libertini* in Judæa at the period, of which St.

3. *Annal.* II. 85. Tom. I. p. 129. ed. Brotier.

Luke was speaking, which was about fifteen years after their banishment from Italy.

The review which has been taken of the facts recorded in the New Testament, shall be concluded with some remarks, from which it will appear, that the actions, ascribed to our Saviour, are of that description, that they *could not* have been recorded, if they had not been true. Independently of the miracles performed by our Saviour, which shall be considered in the next Lecture, his general conduct as described by the Evangelists, is that of a person surpassing both in wisdom and in goodness the most perfect character, that was ever drawn by Roman or by Grecian eloquence. The character of our Saviour, as represented by the Evangelists, is not drawn in a *formal* manner, exhibiting at one view the various qualities, of which that character is composed. The character of our Saviour must be learnt by comparing the facts, recorded of him, with the situations, in which he was placed, and the circumstances, under which he acted. This comparison exhibits unshaken fortitude in the severest trials, calmness undisturbed by provocation, kindness returned for injury, and dignity maintained inviolate through every action of his life. Nor is the wisdom and the judgement dis-

played on every trying occasion less conspicuous in the character of our Saviour. At the same time we perceive the gradual unfolding of a scheme for the general welfare of mankind, a scheme uniform and consistent in all its parts, yet misunderstood *at first* by the Apostles themselves, as being opposed to the general prejudices of the Jews. Facts of *this* description could not have been *invented* by the Apostles. Plain and unlettered Jews, as the twelve Apostles were, though adequate to the office of recording what they had seen and heard, were incapable of fabricating a series of actions, which constitute the most exalted character, that ever existed upon earth. If the learning and the ingenuity of Plato or Xenophon might have enabled them to draw a picture of Socrates more excellent than the original itself, it was not in the power of unlettered Jews to give ideal perfection to a character, which was itself imperfect, and to sustain that ideal perfection, as in a dramatic representation, through a series of imaginary events. Indeed it is highly probable, that the Apostles and Evangelists were not *wholly aware* of that perfection, which they themselves have described. For that perfection is not contained in any formal panegyric, expressive of the writer's opinion and indicating that opinion to the reader. It is known

only by comparison and by inference. We are reduced therefore to this dilemma. Either the actions, which are ascribed to our Saviour, are *truly* ascribed to him; or actions have been invented for a purpose, of which the inventors themselves were probably not aware, and applied to that purpose by means, which the inventors did not possess. And when we further consider, that the plan developed by those facts was in direct opposition to the notion of the Jews respecting a temporal Messiah, we must believe in what was wholly impossible, if we believe, that unlettered Jews could have *invented* them.

LECTURE XXX.

IN the whole extent of our theological inquiries, there is no question of such vital importance, as the question, whether the miracles, ascribed to our Saviour, are *justly* ascribed to him. If we had reason to believe, that they were merely *pretended* miracles ; if we had reason to believe, that they were mere delusions, which ignorance and credulity mistook for something supernatural, a main pillar of Christianity would be shaken to its very foundation. Our Saviour himself appeals to his miracles, as proofs of his divine mission. By the argument from miracles, combined with the argument from prophecy, he established the fact, that he was the promised Messiah. And these are the arguments on which we ourselves must rely, for our belief in the divine origin of the Christian religion. Prophecy fulfilled, and real miracles, *cannot* be ascribed to the mere agency of man. When a religion therefore is introduced by miracles, and prophecies are accomplished in it, *that* religion cannot be

the invention of man, *that* religion proceeded by revelation from God. But if no miracles were performed, and no prophecies were accomplished, the arguments which were founded on them, both by Christ and by his Apostles, would then rest on a mere imaginary foundation. It is true that *other* arguments have been used as evidences for Christianity, in addition to the two *great* arguments, which were employed by Christ and his Apostles. And those additional evidences are very useful, as auxiliaries to the *principal* arguments. But if we take away miracles and prophecy, the auxiliaries will become too feeble to stand by themselves. Miracles and prophecy alone can prove, that the *origin* of Christianity was *divine*.

The importance therefore of the inquiry, which we are now going to institute, is such, that it influences the question, whether our religion originated, as unbelievers assert, in mere human invention, or is a religion which came from God.

But before we enter on this inquiry, we must determine what is *meant* by a miracle. For without a clear *definition* of the term, our arguments on a subject of such intricacy and difficulty

can never be brought to a determinate conclusion. A miracle, as defined by Dr. Johnson, is something above human power. But as in the scale of creation there are Beings superior to man, though alike subordinate to God, we may rather define a miracle, as something which cannot be performed without the special interference of God himself. This definition of a miracle accords with the application of the term, as used by Christ and his Apostles. They argue from those miracles as proofs of a divine mission, which they would not be, if they were owing to the agency of Beings *inferior* to God. Nicodemus likewise understood the term in the same sense, when applied to the actions of our Saviour. 'We know (said he) that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles, that thou doest, except *God* be with him.'

Another definition of a miracle is a suspension of the laws of nature. This definition accords with the preceding: for a suspension of the laws of nature is an act, which can be performed only by God himself. That Almighty Being, which created the world, and ordained the laws by which it is governed, can at his pleasure, either partially suspend, or even permanently alter them. But no *other* power can alter or suspend what is

ordained by the *almighty* power. A real miracle therefore is different, as well in *kind*, as in degree, from things which *appear* only wonderful or marvellous. If experiments can be made in natural philosophy, which seem marvellous to those, who know not the relation of the cause to the effect, they are no deviations from the laws of nature; on the contrary, they are produced by those laws. They are the work of man acting under those general rules, by which the almighty Creator directs and governs the world. But a miracle neither is, nor *can* be the work of man, unassisted by the special interference of God. For when a miracle is performed, an effect is produced, which is *contrary* to the laws of nature. This notion of a miracle is adopted also by Mr. Hume: and we shall presently see, that arguing even from the notion, which he himself adopts, we may fairly meet his objections to the *Credibility* of miracles. But we must previously examine some other objections.

We have already seen how justly Nicodemus argued from the miracles performed by our Saviour. But other Jews endeavoured to evade the inference, by contending that those miracles were owing to the agency of evil spirits. That such a notion was entertained by Jews in the first

century, is not surprising, as it accorded with then prevalent opinions. But that a controversy should have been conducted in modern times, respecting the question, whether the agency of evil spirits could account for those miracles, is what we should *not* have expected. Nor have we less reason to be surprised at the manner, in which this question has been answered even in the *negative*. It has been contended, that the miracles performed by our Saviour could not have been owing to the agency of *evil* spirits, because they were acts of *benevolence*. Undoubtedly the miracles of our Saviour were no less illustrations of divine *benevolence*, than they were illustrations of divine *power*. And it does not require much reasoning to shew the absurdity of ascribing acts of benevolence to Beings so constituted as to produce only evil. But if this were the *sole* reason, why the miracles of our Saviour could not be owing to the agency of evil spirits, the argument from miracles would be at once defeated. For if Beings inferior to God, though superior to man, were unable to effect those miracles, for no *other* reason, than because the *character* of those miracles accorded not with the character of those Beings, it would follow as a necessary consequence, that those miracles *might* have been performed by spirits of an *opposite* character.

The scripture teaches us, that there are good, as well as evil spirits: and with respect to *power*, we cannot suppose the former inferior to the latter. But if we admit that *any* power inferior to the *almighty* power could have produced the miracles which Jesus did, those miracles must cease to prove the *divine* origin of Christianity. The evasion therefore of the Jews must be met by an absolute and *general* denial. Though the miracles of our Saviour were illustrations of his benevolence, we must argue from them as illustrations of his *power*. It is the power which he displayed in the working of miracles, that argued his divine authority. And if those miracles, as illustrations of power, had not in themselves implied divine authority, they could not have done so, either by the attribute of benevolence, or by any other concomitant circumstances whatever.

But the consideration of the manner, in which the evasion of the Jews may be most effectually answered, is of less importance, than the *admission*, which that evasion implies. The very *attempt* to account for the miracles, whether right or wrong, implies at least the *existence* of them. We have therefore not only the testimony of the Apostles, whose sincerity is proved by their sacrifice of all earthly advantages; we have the testi-

mony of those, who were interested in *denying* the miracles. And if they had been *able* to deny those miracles, they would certainly have done it. The miracles performed by our Saviour, were not, like most of the *pretended* miracles, as well of ancient as of modern times, performed in secret, or in the presence only of a chosen few. They were performed in the presence of hundreds and of thousands: they were performed, as well in the presence of adversaries, as in the presence of friends. Such miracles come attested by very different evidence, from that which has been alleged in favour of those pretended miracles, recorded, either by profane historians, or by legendaries of the Church of Rome.

If indeed the objections of some modern philosophers were founded in truth, it would be useless to produce any evidence whatever. For according to those objections there is *no* evidence by which the truth of a miracle can be established. Before we proceed therefore with the evidence for the miracles recorded in the New Testament, it is necessary that we should inquire, whether a miracle is *capable* of proof.

It was a favourite maxim with the French Encyclopedists, and with those who adopted

their principles, that the notion of a miracle destroys *itself*. They contended that the notion of a miracle involved an absurdity, as consisting of parts which were irreconcilable. Now the notion of a miracle undoubtedly implies, that the world is governed by general laws, and that a miracle is an event which is *contrary* to those laws. But the government of the world by general laws, and a departure from those laws on particular occasions, are irreconcilable only on the two following suppositions; either that there is no God, or, that if there is a God, both himself and the Universe are bound in the chains of fatalism. Now the latter supposition is hardly different from the former. There is at least no practical difference, between the non-existence of a God, and the existence of a God, who possesses not the attributes of Deity. With those who can deny the being of a God, I know not how to argue. Where the human intellect is so perverted, that they who can perceive intelligence and design in a clock-work, which *represents* the movements of the heavenly bodies, are yet unable to perceive intelligence and design, when they ascend from the humble imitation to the great original, no arguments can avail. It is useless to argue with those, who deny that a contrivance implies a contriver: who can doubt

whether the eye was made for seeing, or the ear for hearing. Nor would I pretend to argue with those, who, if they admit that there is a God in *name*, deny him the attributes, which constitute a God in *reality*. If the wisdom displayed in the works of the Creation indicate a wise Creator, no ties of necessity could have shackled the exercise of his wisdom, no ties of necessity could have limited the exercise of his power. But if the same power, which made the laws of nature is able to suspend them, it cannot be true, that the notion of a miracle destroys itself.

A more powerful and a more seducing argument is the argument from *experience*, as explained by Mr. Hume, in his *Essay on Miracles*. He begins by asserting what is very true, that "a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature¹." He then proceeds in the following words. "As a firm and unalterable *experience* has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from *experience* can possibly be imagined." In the next page he proceeds in the following words. "'Tis a miracle, that a dead man should come to life, because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must therefore be

¹, Hume's *Essays*, Vol. II. p. 180. 2d ed. London, 1753.

“ an uniform *experience* against every miraculous
 “ event ; otherwise the event would not merit the
 “ appellation. And as uniform *experience* amounts
 “ to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof
 “ from the nature of the fact, against the existence
 “ of any miracle.” In the second part of the same
 Essay, he compares the value of human testimony
 when opposed to general experience in regard
 to miracles. And to render the parallel more ob-
 vious, he founds the value of human testimony
 on *experience* also. “ ’Tis experience only” (says
 Mr. Hume²) “ which gives authority to human
 “ testimony : and ’tis the same experience which
 “ assures us of the laws of nature. When there-
 “ fore these two kinds of experience are contrary,
 “ we have nothing to do, but to subtract the
 “ one from the other.” Since then experience is
against a miracle, whereas experience does not
 always decide for the veracity of a witness, the
 experience which operates against a miracle can
 never, in the opinion of Mr. Hume, be overcome
 by any testimony in its favour.

A learned Prelate, who has deservedly gained
 much reputation by his defence of the miracles,
 has met the objection of Mr. Hume by arguing
 against the parallel which he has drawn between

2. Ibid. p. 202.

the two kinds of experience, and by combating the argument, that the connexion between human testimony, and the events testified, is founded on experience alone. This connexion Mr. Hume had endeavoured to establish in the former part of his *Essay* by the following argument³. “It
“being a general maxim, that no objects have
“any discoverable connexion together, and that
“all the inferences we can draw from one to
“another, are founded merely on our *experience*
“of their constant and regular conjunction, ’tis
“evident we ought not to make an exception to
“this maxim in favour of *human testimony*, whose
“connexion with any *events* seems, in itself, as
“little necessary as any other.” Now it is certainly a very broad assertion, that *all* the inferences we can draw from one object to another are founded merely on the *experience* of their regular conjunction. And it may be fairly answered by the counter-assertion, that the relation of cause and effect *may* be established independently of experience. But if this relation may be established a priori, when we argue generally and abstractedly, yet when we consider the relation of a *particular* cause to a *particular* effect, our experience that the latter *does* follow the former,

3. Hume's *Essays*. Vol. II. p. 177. 2d ed. London, 1753.

affords a proof of that connexion, which perhaps is more satisfactory than any reasoning a priori.

I would meet therefore Mr. Hume's objection, not by denying the parallel, nor by resisting that part of his argument, which makes the value of *testimony* dependent on experience, but by resisting that part of the argument, which connects experience with *miracles*. And if there is a flaw in *this* part of his reasoning, the whole of it falls at once to the ground.

It appears from his own words, which have been already quoted, that he argues on the supposition of "*a firm and unalterable* experience" in regard to the laws of nature. He takes for granted therefore that those laws *are* unalterable, at the very time when the question is in agitation, whether they *were* altered in particular cases. The argument therefore postulates what it professes to prove. When we argue for the possibility of a *miracle*, we argue for the possibility of a *deviation* from the laws of nature; and we argue on the ground, that the same Almighty Being who made those laws must have the power of altering or suspending them. If therefore *while* we are contending for an alteration or suspension of those laws, with respect to the miracles ascribed

to our Saviour, we are told that those laws are unalterable, we are met by a mere *petitio principii*. In short the argument from experience, as applied to miracles, includes more than the nature of the argument admits. Though an event may be contrary to common experience, we must not set out with the supposition, that the rule admits of no exception. We must not confound general with *universal* experience, and thus include *beforehand* the very things for which an exception is claimed.

Indeed Mr. Hume himself appears to have been aware, that his reasoning on the subject of miracles was not altogether conclusive. In the second part of his *Essay* * he qualifies his inference by saying, "that no human testimony can
" have such a force as to prove a miracle, and
" make it a just foundation for any system of
" religion." And he adds a note, which begins with the following words. "I beg the limitations
" may be remarked, when I say, that a miracle
" can never be proved, so as to be the *foundation*
" of a system of Religion. For I own, that
" otherwise there may possibly be miracles, or
" violations of the usual course of nature, of such

* Hume's *Essays*, Vol. II. p. 203. 2d ed. London, 1753.

“ a kind as to *admit* of proof from human testimony.”

We see then, that Mr. Hume admits, after all, that a miracle *may* be proved by human testimony. He contends indeed for an exception, when the alleged miracles are made the foundation of a system of religion. Now the case, for which Mr. Hume thus claims an exception, is the very case, in which above all others we might *expect* the interposition of the Almighty, the very case therefore in which the existence of miracles would be most probable. The foundation of a new religion is a matter of such high importance, that there cannot be an object more *worthy* of that special interference, which is shewn by a suspension of the laws of nature. And it is the suspension of those laws, by which the special interference of the Almighty is made known to us. When we read of wonders in the ancient historians, or in the legends of the Church of Rome, or when we contemplate the miracles alleged to have been performed in the middle of the last century at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, on which Mr. Hume particularly dwells, we can discover no *motives* for the special interference of the Almighty by a suspension of his laws. They were not occasions worthy of such high inter-

ference, without which a miracle is a thing impossible. In all such cases therefore we may be certain, that *some* deception was practised, whether we are able to discover that deception, or not. But in the miracles ascribed to our Saviour and his Apostles, there was an object that *did* merit the divine interposition. The object was nothing less than the promulgation of a new religion, which was designed to regulate the faith and practice of the whole human race.

If it be objected, that the divine origin of Christianity is in this manner pre-supposed, in order to strengthen an argument by which it must be proved, the answer is, that I am not at present giving any proof whatever. I am merely arguing against that *exception* to the general principle, which Mr. Hume himself *admits*. And since even they who reject Christianity must allow that its *professed* object was the introduction of a religion which should influence the whole human race, this alone is sufficient to prevent the miracles, recorded in the New Testament, from being made an *exception* to the rule. In arguing against that exception nothing more is intended, than to claim for those miracles the benefit of a fair trial. The trial itself is the object of our next consideration.

It has been already admitted, that events of ordinary occurrence may be credited on testimony; which would be insufficient to command our assent to events of a different description. The argument from experience is *so* far valid, that in proportion as any alleged fact is a *deviation* from our experience, in that same proportion do we require additional evidence, before we believe it. An inhabitant of the torrid zone, who had never passed the limits of his own country, and therefore had never seen water except in a liquid state, would certainly not believe it, when told for the *first* time, that there were other countries, in which water at certain seasons of the year was converted into a solid mass, capable of sustaining the greatest weights. Such a conversion would to *him* appear miraculous, because it was contrary, both to his own experience, and to the experience of all those, with whom he had *previously* conversed. And he would be no more disposed to believe that water could be converted into a solid body, than to believe that it could be converted into wine. But his unbelief would gradually give way, as the testimony to the fact became stronger. If his intercourse with persons who had been in colder climates should increase, and they all concurred in asserting the same fact, the unbelief which had been founded

on the argument from experience, would finally yield to human testimony. In like manner a fact *may* be proved by human testimony, which is contrary to the experience, not of *one* country only, but of *all* countries.

It is contrary to the common experience of *all* countries, that a dead man should be restored to life. But a fact even of *this* description is still capable of being proved by human testimony. We must guard against that *fallacious* mode of stating the argument from experience, which includes in the *statement itself* the very thing for which we claim an exception. We must not say, that it is contrary to *universal* experience, that a dead man has been restored to life: nor must we say in the words of Mr. Hume, that such an event 'has *never* been observed in any age or country⁵.' In *so* stating the argument, we pre-judge the question. If we set out with the supposition, that such an event has *never* happened, the question whether it *did* happen in a particular instance cannot even be proposed. But if we say, that such an event is contrary to the *common* experience of all countries, we say as much as can or ought to be said, when the

5. Hume's *Essays*, Vol. II. p. 181, 2d. ed. London, 1753.

question is in agitation, whether such an event has taken place or not. And as we have seen that the argument from the experience of *one* country, may be overcome by human testimony, so we shall find that human testimony *may* overcome the argument from the common experience of *all* countries.

Let us select for a trial the miracle performed by our Saviour in the restoration of Lazarus. This miracle is recorded in the eleventh Chapter of St. John's Gospel: and the circumstantial account not only of the transaction itself, but of every thing, which preceded and followed it, shews that St. John himself was eye-witness to the whole. In the first place, therefore, we have the testimony of a witness, whose character for veracity is unimpeachable. And the fact itself is of that description, that St. John could not have been deluded by any art or contrivance into a belief of the fact, if it had not really happened. From the report of Martha, the sister of Lazarus, it appeared that Lazarus had been dead four days, and already in that state, which is an unerring proof of real death. All suspicion therefore of any collusion is precluded. It cannot be pretended, that Lazarus was not dead, when placed in the tomb. When the

tomb was opened, his very *face* was bound about with a napkin. But if his sisters Martha and Mary had placed him in the tomb alive, to afford an opportunity for a pretended miracle, they would not have done that, which must have extinguished life, if life had remained. His burial was likewise a matter of notoriety: for persons were assembled in the house of Martha and Mary comforting them for the loss of their brother: and when Mary went out to meet our Saviour, they said, "She goeth unto "the grave to weep there." When our Saviour himself arrived at the grave, he was attended not only by the sisters of Lazarus, and by his own disciples, but by many Jews who were likewise witnesses to the miracle. It was an act therefore not performed in secret, or in the presence only of friends: it was done publicly, and was open to the scrutiny of those, who were not the followers of Jesus. Such persons cannot be considered as *prejudiced* witnesses: yet such was their conviction of the fact, that in consequence of this miracle they became *believers*. The miracle was moreover subjected to a *judicial* examination by the chief priests and pharisees assembled in *Council*. And what was the result of their examination. The result, as stated in the words of St. John was, "This man doeth

“many miracles: if we let him alone, all men will believe on him.”

Surely then we have sufficient evidence for the truth of the miracle in question. Though it is contrary to common experience, that a man really dead should come to life, yet as human testimony *may* outweigh the argument which is founded on such experience, so in the present instance the testimony is so powerful that it *must* preponderate.

In like manner we may establish the truth of the other miracles ascribed to our Saviour. We have likewise satisfactory evidence for the miracles ascribed to the Apostles. And there is an additional argument for the miracles ascribed to St. Paul, in the appeal which he has made to the persons, in whose presence he performed them. But as this argument has been fully explained at the beginning of the Lectures, on the Authenticity of the New Testament, it need not now be repeated.

The facts recorded in the New Testament, as well those which are miraculous, as those, which are of ordinary occurrence, have now been shewn to be worthy of credit.

But beside the Credibility of *facts* we must consider the Credibility of *doctrines*. The latter question however lies within a narrow compass. When the Credibility of the facts has been established, the Credibility of the doctrines follows as a matter of course. As the miracles ascribed to our Saviour are justly ascribed to him, they prove his divine authority, and consequently that his doctrine was from God. In like manner since St. Paul and the other Apostles were gifted with the power of miracles, that power which God alone could have given them, is again a proof that their doctrine was from God. As the *facts* therefore recorded in the New Testament, are fully entitled to our assent, so the *doctrines* recorded in the New Testament, may be justly admitted as the basis of our faith and morals.

Here then I will conclude the series of Lectures on the Authenticity and Credibility of the New Testament: a series of regular and continued deduction, in which no proposition has been admitted without previous proof, in which no argument has been applied, that is dependent on the subject of application. I have complied therefore with the strictest demands, which can be made by those, who require a *reason* of the hope that is in us. And if these

Lectures, thus rigidly adhering to the laws of consistent demonstration, shall be the means of convincing one unbeliever, the labour bestowed on them will not have been bestowed in vain.



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