

A
DISSERTATION:
O R,
INQUIRY

Concerning the

Canonical Authority

OF THE
GOSPEL according to MATHEW;
AND THE

REASONS upon which it hath been
Antiently rejected by *Heretics* :

OCCASIONED

By a late Pamphlet, intituled, A Third Pastoral LETTER --- To the People of the two great Cities of *London* and *Westminster* ;

Pretending to be a Defence of the Canon of the NEW TESTAMENT.

Nam cum omnibus in rebus temeritas in assentiendo, errorque, turpis est ; tum in eo loco maximè, in quo judicandum est, quantum rebus divinis, religionique tribuamus. --- Est enim periculum, ne aut neglectis iis, impiâ fraude, aut susceptis, anili superstitione, obligemur.

CIC. de Divin. l. i. sub. Init.

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L O N D O N :

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A

DISSERTATION, &c.



HE limiting, and ascertaining the Books, of the sacred *Canon*, of the *New Testament* among *Christians*, and the maintaining its Divine Authority against *Unbelievers*; hath engaged the pens, and imployed the wits of some of the greatest men, in all ages, from the first *Rise* of *Christianity* it self.

Our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* were no sooner off the Stage, than Forgeries of all kinds, broke in with irresistible force, *Gospels*, *Epistles*, *Acts*, *Revelations*, *Liturgies* without number; published in the names, and under the feigned Authority of *Jesus Christ*, and his *Apostles*, abounded in the *Christian Church*; and as some of these were as early in time, as any of the writings

ings in our present *Canon*, so we find ¹, they were received promiscuously with them, and held in equal Credit and Veneration.

In a word, they were made use of by the immediate successors of the *Apostles*, and many of them read in the Public Assemblies of *Christians*, as *Canonical Scripture*, without the least mark of *Distinction*, in point of *Authority*: so that the Question hath long been, and still is; whether these *Scriptures* (some of which are now extant, and in high ² Esteem with learned men) have not as good a Right, to be admitted into the *Canon*, as some of the Books now there; and the rather, as it does not appear ³, when, or by whom these were separately collected, or by what *New Testimony* they obtained, the *Distinction* they at present bear, in the *Catho-*

¹ *Vid.* Dodwell's Dissert. on *Irenæus*, I. Sect. 38, 39. Toland's Amyntor, p. 20. Clark's Reflect. on Aryn. p. 277. Mill. Prolegom. S. 133, &c.

² *Vid.* A. B. Wake's Preliminary Discourse to his *English Transl. of Apostol. Fathers*, ch. 10. Whiston's Prim. Christianity, &c. Jones's Method of settling the Canon, Dodwell, Toland, Mill. &c.

³ 'Tis pretended by some, that our present *Canon* was established by the *Council*, or rather *Provincial Synod* of *Laodicea* Conven'd about the year 360, consisting of 32 Bishops; tho' 'tis much doubted, whether there ever was any such *Synod* at all, but if there ever was, how could these few, at that distance of time, and among such a variety of books, determine, which were the true writings of the *Apostles*; and what *authority* had this slender *Synod* to determine in a matter of so great consequence for the whole *Catholic* church?

lic Church ; the *Authority* of them having been disputed, from their first Publication and appearance in the world ; and more especially *the Gospel*, intitled, *according to Mathew*, which is the subject of the ensuing Discourse.

This *Gospel* (I find) hath been not only disputed, but absolutely rejected by great numbers of *Christians* ; some of whom were of the *Primitive Class*, even the *Nazarens*, or first converts to *Christianity*, who 'tis believed used a different *Gospel* to it ; or one very much interpolated and enlarged ; which in opposition to Ours, they constantly affirmed, to be the only *True Gospel*, of *St. Mathew the Apostle*.

Which Rejection (as is said) of the *First Christians*, hath raised great Suspicion, of the Genuineness of our present *Gospel*, and caused many Inquiries concerning it ; and the very little that hath been offered for its support, in a late *Twelve-penny Pamphlet*, intitled, *A Third Pastoral Letter to the People of the Two Great Cities of London and Westminster* ; pretending to be wrote by a Person, who hath aspired to great Dignity in the Church, and to contain *a clear Eviction, of the Truth and Authority of all the Sacred Writings of the New Testament*, hath very much contributed to that suspicion, and in great measure occasioned the following *Dissertation and Inquiry*.

In

In which as the Arguments, and Evidence, of the antient and modern Opposers of this *Gospel*, are freely represented, so whatever is taken out of the *Fathers*, and Ecclesiastical Historians, in relation to it, is fairly cited; I have dealt equally in that respect, as became one, who aims sincerely at the *Truth*, and therefore shall not need, to make Apologies for the Undertaking; it being apparently every man's duty, to do all he can, for the discovery of the *Truth*, which must necessarily advance the interest of *True Religion and Virtue*.

Nevertheless I am aware, some will think it, not very becoming a Private Person, to disturb the world, either with his own, or others doubts, tending to lessen the *Credit*, of any one Book of the present *Canon*, so many ages past *Established*, and for the most part *Acquiesced* in; and more especially of that very *Book*, which stands the *first* in order of time, as well as Place, and in the opinion of the most, is, as it were, the *Basis*, and *Outwork* of the whole *Gospel-history*.

But as I am not alone in Inquiries of this nature, the ablest *Divines*, and the greatest *Friends to Christianity*, having bu-
 ried themselves on the same subject before me; so let such Objectors consider, that *Truth* always gains ground, and is the more
 illustrated

illustrated by such Inquiries, and therefore is to be pursued at all Events; especially, such *Truths* as concern mens Eternal Salvation; and that nothing can be more foolish, or presumptuous, than to confine *The Word of God*, to just such a number of Books; or to Lean wholly on *Authority* in sacred things, how Old or established soever; and farther also, that should the *Heretical Arguments* (here purely collected for the sake of better instruction) prevail, even to render *Matthew's Gospel* still more suspected by some than it is; yet *Religion* can be in no danger, *The Will of God* being sufficiently comprised, in the other *Canonical Books*, both of the *Old* and *New Testament*; or if perhaps all these shall not be thought sufficient, yet there are still more *Gospels* behind, waiting without, praying for admittance into the *sanctified Number*.

But here 'tis not to be omitted, that there have been some *Christians*, who not perfectly satisfy'd, with Father ¹ *Irenæus's* Reasons, that there can be neither more, nor less, than *Four Gospels*; have found fault with, and rais'd scruples, even from the stated number, of our present *Gospels*, it self; alledging that in the main, they contain little more, than a four-fold re-

¹ Because there be four regions only in the world, with four principal winds, therefore there can be but four gospels. *Adv. Hæres. l. 3. c. 11.*

lation of the same facts, of the same one *Divine Person*, of which they imagine the *Holy Ghost*, could never be the Author; for who will say, the *Holy Ghost*, could ever be the Dictator, of *Superfluity* and *Repetition*; or that if he had inspired the Writer (suppose) of any one *Gospel*, such *Gospel* alone, should not have been sufficient to all the purposes of *Evangelical Revelation*?

The number of *Gospels* (say they) reflect deficiency on each other; more *Gospels* than one, instead of witnessing for, imply Defects in those that went before, for the supplying of which the latter were necessarily publish'd; for instance, St. *Luke* wrote his *Gospel* only, because many who had *Undertaken*, *Attempted*, or *Endeavour'd* at, the same thing before him; had not *acquitted themselves faithfully*, or had not been sufficiently *accurate* therein; this is the sense most interpreters put on the first words of St. *Luke's Proœmium*, and some think he must needs have had regard to *Matthew's Gospel* (among others) which was then extant, and could not but be known to him.—But however that be, 'tis manifest in Ecclesiastical History, that the sole¹ Occasion of St. *John's* writing his *Gospel* in his very old Age, was purely to supply the

¹ *Euseb. E. H. l. 3. c. 24. Clem. Alex. apud eund. lib. 6. c. 14. Jerom. Catal. viror. Illust. in Joann. Epiphan. Hæres. 2. Alog. N° 12.*

defects,

defects, which himself, and the *Asian Bishops* had observ'd, in all the other three,—

This the *Fathers* generally acknowledge, tho' in so doing ('tis apprehended) they immediately subvert, the *Divine Authority* of those *Gospels*; which few in reading those *Fathers* observe, not because of the difficulty, but because men dare not see, nor look into the grounds of their own *Belief*, taken implicitly from their *Teachers*; as is evident in a famous example we have, of a late *Right Rev. Bishop* of our own *Church*, who when an inferior *Priest* would have persuaded him, to have published a little book for the correction of such *errors*, and *practices*, as had crept into the *Church*, since the first settlement of *Christianity*; answered him with great emotion in these words¹. *Sir, I dare not examine, I dare not examine, for if we should examine, and find that you are in the Right, the Church has then been in an Error, so many hundred years.*—A pretty confession this, of a Pastor of a reformed Church.

But 'tis thought for all that, the said *Bishop's* Case (miserable as it was) is not singular— from the very slight defence, the *Pastoral Letter-writer* has made, for the *Gospel-history* in general, and its reputed

¹ These words are attested by the Rev. Mr. *Whiston* under his hand, as spoken by Bishop *Smalridge* to himself. *Vid.* *Mem. of Dr. Clark's Life*, p. 177.

Authors in particular: to judge him sincere, a man must conclude he had but a superficial knowledge of the subject he undertook, and that if he had dar'd to examine things deeply, and acquainted himself more intimately, with the opposition some Books of the *New Testament* have met with, and the arguments of *Heretics* thereupon, he would have chose, not to have entred into the Disquisition at all, rather than have left it, upon such pitiful evidence, as must needs increase the number of those *Heretics*.

The *Letter-writer*, after having repeated some *Heads*, or *Contents* of his two former letters, wherein he pretends ¹ *he has laid before us, the evidences of the Christian Religion, as drawn from the accounts, the Evangelists give us of our Saviour Christ:—* He proceeds in this his third Letter to shew, what in truth is the case ², — *That Infidelity can have no other possible refuge but in Infidelity — or downright disbelief of the Truth and Authority of the Writings of the New Testament.— To the End therefore, we may be arm'd in all points, against the attempts of Infidelity and every approach to it:—* He hath judged it expedient (he says) *to Enter into that Matter, i. e. into the proof of the Writings of the New Testament, more fully and distinctly, in order to give*

¹ *Post. Let. pag. 3. Edit. 1.*

² *Ib. p. 5.*

us a clear View of the Evidences both of their Truth and Authority. His Positions for which, so far as they relate to the four Gospels, more particularly, are these.

First ¹, — *That these Gospels contain, a faithful and true account, of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. And,*

Secondly, *That they have been faithfully transmitted to the Christians of succeeding Ages. — These Heads alone are sufficient; and which, if the Letter-writer attends to, and makes good, he will merit the applause of all Christendom.*

His first head is, — *That the four Gospels contain, a faithful and true account, of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, &c. of Jesus Christ. — Then follows* ², — *That if we would be satisfied of the truth of any History, the two things we chiefly inquire after are, the Knowledge the Writer had of his subject, and the Character he bore in point of integrity; — But when the Reader naturally expected, he should have fairly entered into some such Inquiry, and have proved first, who the Authors of the four Gospels were, and then have given some tolerable account of their Characters: — All he says to it is* ³, — *That the greatest Enemies of Christianity have never denied, but that there was such a Person as Jesus of Na-*

¹ Past Let. p. 9.

² Ib. p. 9.

³ Ib. p. 9.

areth, who lived at the time the Gospels speak of, and who made choice of several Persons, to be his Disciples (or Apostles) two of which were Evangelists — These (he says) left their Callings and Occupations, to attend and receive instructions from Jesus; they both saw him, and felt him, were daily conversant with him, and the like. — And besides these Natural Qualifications (he calls them) they were supernaturally assisted also to give an account of Christ's Life and Actions.

I do not find, the Letter-writer offers at any other Evidence, for these historical facts, than the pretended Negative one, drawn from the *Enemies of Christianity* not denying 'em, except that he has a citation or two out of the Gospels, to shew¹; *That Christ's Apostles were all familiar with him, and saw all his miracles from the Beginning*; which is false of *Matthew*, and does not relate to *Mark* and *Luke*, two other of the *Evangelists*.

Now the *Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus*, as published by the *Evangelists*, including in them a great variety of facts, vastly transcending all human Powers; *Infidels* had just reason to expect, the Letter-writer should have been more than ordinary particular, in his proofs concerning them; especially, as he undertook to enter into the matter *so fully and*

¹ P. A. Letter, p. 10.

distinctly,

distinctly, as thereby to lay before us a clear view of all their Evidence; whereas having failed absolutely in so doing, and in great measure departed too, from his own Position; he has given occasion to Infidels to blaspheme our Holy Canon more than ever; and to become more obdurate in their disbelief of it; so dangerous is it to trifle in our undertakings with sacred things.

And then, as to the *antient Enemies of Christianity*, whom the *Letter-writer* in this, and ¹ another place, lays great stress on, as having never denied the *Gospel-facts*, it may with much better Grace be affirmed, they never believed them; for if they did, why were they any longer *Enemies to Christianity*? The Gospels testify, and the Event of things too plainly proves, that the Divine Jesus lived and died *without Honour in his own country*. What *Pagan Authors* at, or near his own time, wrote of him, cannot now be so perfectly known, but may be pretty well guessed at, by the primitive Zealots destroying all their Writings, and making it their Merit so to do.

Notwithstanding, *Infidels* will be apt to put the *Letter-writer* in Mind, that there is not a single *Gospel* in our present *Canon* but which hath been wrote against, and denied, not only by *the Enemies of Christianity*, but by *Christians* too, whose Writings

¹ Past. Let. p. 14.

likewise have been all for that Reason destroyed.

'Tis very certain (I am sorry to say it) there is no mention of any such person as *Christ* by name, in any one profane Author, whether *Jew* or *Pagan*, at or near *Christ's* own time, as the *Letter-writer*, without any ground is pleased to ¹ Affirm.

For as to *Tacitus*, *Suetonius* and *Pliny*, cotemporaries under *Trajan*, these all living in the second Century, at an immense distance from *Palestine*, could know nothing of the *Gospel-history*, but from common Report, and what they say either of *Christ* or his followers, is so little for their Credit, that the *Letter-writer* had much better omitted, all mention of these Authors.

So that (I say) what we have besides these, either of *Jews* or *Gentiles* relating to *Christ's* Person, are either known Forgeries, or they are found only, in the Christian *Priests* or *Fathers* who cite them as they please; and where nevertheless we often find, even by the confession of those *Fathers* themselves, how both *Jews* and *Gentiles* actually denied *Christ's* divine Birth, Life, Miracles, Resurrection, &c. Reproaching also *Christians* for their Credulity in that respect, and Ridiculing them exceedingly, for *Magnifying his Person* in the

¹ Part. Let. p. 16.

excessive manner they were wont to do.— Not that the *Heathens* themselves knew ought concerning *Him*; no, not that any such person as *Jesus* ever existed, what they said being arguments, *Ad hominem* only, without Entering into the Reality of those facts which *Christians* themselves reported of him.

It is impossible, indeed, in the nature of the thing, would the *Letter-writer* be so ingenuous to own it, that *the Enemies of Christianity*, the *Heathen-world* especially, should know any thing of *Our Saviour* but what must needs have come, from his own followers; so *obscure a Person* as he is on all sides confessed to have been, considering too, the little time he set up for a *Preacher*, and in that time did all he could, to *conceal* himself from *Public notice*, forbidding commonly his *Disciples*, and others to make him known, and wandering for that end himself, up and down in *By-places*, and conversing to the End of his life, with the meanest *sort of People*, scarce ever appearing in the great City of *Jerusalem*, I think, but twice after he became a *Preacher*, viz. at that *Passover* in which he died, and *once* before.

And then as to what is related of him in the *Gospels*, and other Books of the *New Testament*, these 'tis known were wrote so late, and lay afterwards so long
conceal'd

conceal'd in the *Archives* of the Churches, and *Desks* of *Private Persons*, to whom they were particularly directed, *That they came not to light* (says the learned ¹ *Dodwell*) *till the Reign of the Emperor Trajan, or perhaps that of Adrian*, which, according to the *vulgar Æra*, was near one hundred and thirty years after *Christ*, and then they were to be found only, in the hands of *Ecclésiastics*, who preserved them carefully from the *Heathens*, till the third or fourth Century.

Now if the *Letter-writer* is apprised of all this, as he must needs be, and that all the Writings both of *Heathens*, *Jews*, and even of *primitive Christians*, which any way glanced at our *present Christianity*, have been actually destroyed; can any thing appear more disingenuous, than to draw arguments for the Verity of the *Gospel-facts* from their silence? Has the *Letter-writer* no way to support the *Gospel*, but by such mean arts, as must necessarily shock the faith of *Believers*; and expose our *Holy Religion* to the insults of those, who being its cruel enemies know all that is above said to be true? There can be nothing more ridiculous, nor yet dangerous, than to Risque the Truth of our *sacred Writings*, upon the sole negative Evidence of the *Heathens* not refuting them: when

¹ Dissert. 1. in *Irenæum*. S. 38.

when we cannot Dissemble, they came so late into their Hands, that all Tradition concerning the Person of *Jesus*, was at an End, even among the *Jews* themselves, except those of his own Sect, and the *Gentiles*, 'tis certain never had any Personal Knowledge at all of him.

But to have done with the *Enemies of Christianity*, let us now see what Evidence the *Letter-writer* will draw from its Friends, or what he himself will please to argue farther, in Behalf of Our *Sacred Writings*, and the *Authors* of them; as also, what Answer *Heretics* and *Infidels* may possibly make, or rather have often made, to most of his Reasoning.

And first (says he) ¹ *What we find particularly declared by One (Apostle) might be truly said by all of them, viz.* ² “ That they
 “ declared only what they had Heard, what
 “ they had Seen with their own Eyes, and
 “ their Hands had Handled”:—*The Things They Recorded, as Said and Done by Christ* (says this Dealer in Letters) *They Heard from his own Mouth, and Saw with their own Eyes, and did not deliver them upon the Report of others, and more to the same Effect.* The like of which I believe was never yet, so hastily, and needlessly Asserted before *Infidels*; it being certainly True, that the *Evangelical Apostles*, have with

¹ Past. Let. p 10.

² 1 John i. 1.

good Reason, Related many things of their Master, which they neither Heard, nor Saw, directly Said, or Done by Him; and which indeed could not otherwise happen, unless we shall suppose them, fastened to his Side, even as Ribs, never to depart from him.

To give an Instance or two in the *Gospel* which is intended the Subject of Our present *Inquiry*, and of which we take it for Granted, the *Apostle Matthew* was the Author. — What he Relates there of *Mary's Virginity*, of her *Delivery*, and the *Death of Christ* — *Three Mysteries* (says ¹ Ignatius) *Wrought in the Silence of God, and kept Secret even from the Devil.* — These surely could not proceed from the *Apostle's* own Knowledge. — The Account the *Apostle* likewise gives of *Jesus's Baptism*, *His Temptation in the Wilderness*, *On the Pinnacle of the Temple*, and the *Mountain*, and the *Discourse* which passed in those Places, between Him and the Devil; Of *Jesus's long Sermon on the Mount*, *The Miracles performed on the Leper and Centurion's Servant*, and on the *Sea*, in laying the *Tempest*, Of his *Casting out Devils of Two Men*, and *Suffering them to Depart into the Herd of Swine*, with several other Miracles and Facts immediately following the *said Sermon*, and Comprised in his Eighth, and part of his

¹ In. Epist. ad Ephes. S. 19.

Ninth Chapters; all these are Recorded evidently from *Hear-say*, The *Apostle* was present to None of them Himself, They were all Done before his Call to the Apostleship, for he was not with *Jesus* from the *Beginning* as the *Letter-writer* heedlessly asserts, if any Credit is to be given to the *Series* of the *Apostle's* own History:— And tho' some *Harmonists* are so Bold, as to Accuse the Inspired *Apostle*, of some Negligence in that respect; yet, 'tis hard if they will not allow him to know the precise Time, of his own most happy Institution to the Office of an *Apostle*; besides, that 'tis expected from the Piety of the *Letter-writer*, that he will not Join with them in a Reproach so shameful, tho' provoked to't in his own Defence.

And that *Jesus* inform'd *Matthew* afterwards, of all these Particulars with his own Mouth, The *Letter-writer* will not take upon him to make good, either out of *Scripture*, or other *Authority* to be depended on, especially, as the *Humble Jesus* seems plainly to have had no Design, either that the *Apostles*, or any one else, should Record any thing of his Life and Actions.

But, besides those abovementioned, there are several other Facts, related in *Matthew*, even after his Call to the *Apostleship*, to which He was in no wise Privy; as particularly *Christ's Transfiguration on the Mount*,

His Arraignment, and the Proceedings thereon before the Chief Priests and Pilate, with the several Facts, attending his Resurrection, all which he must Record from the Report of others: Therefore the Letter-writer seems a little Rash in making this a Topic of Defence. — That the Apostles Recorded Nothing but what they Saw with their own Eyes, Nothing upon the Report of Others, when 'tis so evident, to Look no farther, That One half of the Gospel we are Treating of, is Built upon Tradition only.

Thus far concerning One of the *Evangelists* only, who was of the Number of the *Twelve Apostles*, of whom more fully hereafter. — Of the other, I shall Say nothing farther in this Place, Than that all Know, his *Gospel* was very near his own Time, ascrib'd to another Person, and that the ¹ *Proëme* hath been thought by some, to be a mere (*Platonic*) Interpolation, or Addition to the *Original Gospel*.

As to *Mark* and *Luke*, the other Two *Evangelists*, and their particular *Gospels*. — The *Letter-writer* says first ², *That it is Affirm'd by Some of the Antients, They were Two of the Seventy Disciples, but durst not Name those Antients, because he Knew,*

¹ Dubitatum diu multumque fuit, hodieque adhuc a quibusdam Dubitatur usque ad Vers. 6. — *Episcop. Oper. Theol.* p. 228. Col. 2.

² *Past. Let.* p. 11.

he had none to name, before the ¹ *Third Century*, whose Tradition is of no consequence. — *Papias* Bishop of *Hierapolis* (the most Antient of all the Fathers) says of *Mark* expressly ², *That he wrote from his own Memory what he had Heard of Peter, for he had neither Heard nor followed Christ himself.* — And *St. Luke* in the *Exordium* of his own *Gospel* intimates; *That he wrote not what he himself was an Eye-witness of, but what he Understood from Others who were.* — These are sufficient Testimonies, that neither *Mark* nor *Luke* were of the Number of the *Seventy Disciples*, as the *Letter-writer*, from Evidence he dares not Name, would Insinuate; as also that they were *Traditionary Writers*.

What he Affirms next of these *Evangelists*, is ³, *That they were both Fellow-labourers* (he calls them) *of St. Paul and St. Peter*, which he does upon no other Ground, than for that he finds the Names of *One Mark* and *One Luke* in *St. Paul's Epistles*, and also of *Mark* in *One of St. Peter's*: But these Names being ordinary, the Question still remains, First, whether the *Gospels* were indeed composed by Persons bearing those respective Names, which (say *Heretics*) the Titles by no Means Ascer-

¹ Origen. contra Marcion. p. 8. Vid. etiam Epiphan. p. 428, & 433. but this last Father speaks only of *Luke*.

² Apud Euseb. E. H. lib. 3. c. 39. ³ Past. Let. p. 11. tain ;

tain ; and, Secondly, if so, whether they were the *Identical Persons* mentioned by those *Apostles*, about which the *Letter-writer* knows ¹ *Divines* differ, and which therefore he ought not to have Concealed from his Inquisitive Reader.

After this, the Gentleman proceeds to give some Account, and to Establish the *Canonical Authority* of their Two Gospels, which he Endeavours at by Raking into the *Fathers*, and proving by some few Citations from them, not that Those Gospels were composed by *immediate Inspiration*, which it was his Business to do : — But, First, *That Mark wrote down his Gospel, as it was Preach'd by Peter* ; and, Secondly, *That Luke composed his out of the Sermons of Paul*. Of which Facts, tho' we are at no manner of ² Certainty ; yet the *Letter-*

¹ *Grotius, Cotelerius, Dr. Cave, Du Pin, Echard, &c.* Deny this of *Mark the Evangelist*, whom they suppose a different Person from him mentioned by *St. Paul*. — And *Erasmus, Calvin, and others*, Deny the same Thing of *Luke*.

² Some say, *Mark* Wrote at the Request of the *Romans* in *Greek*, what *Peter* had Preach'd to them at *Rome* in *Latin*, which is absurd, and that *Peter* saw his Gospel, corrected and approved it. — Others say, *Mark* wrote of his own Memory, what he had Heard *Peter* Preach, but that *Peter* never saw it. — Others, that *Mark* wrote his Gospel in *Egypt*, which is most likely, as he wrote in *Greek* ; and that neither *Peter* nor He ever were at *Rome*. — Whilst the most Judicious, both Antient and Modern, say, *Mark's* Gospel is but a *Licentious Epitome of Mathew's*, as indeed it appears to be.

As to *Luke*, He Himself tells us, That he wrote what he Received from those, *who from the Beginning, were Eye-Witnesses of the Word*, which cannot be Understood of *Paul*. Anonym.
writer

writer Concludes with the same Assurance, as if he had given us, the most convincing Proofs, of all he contends for. — Thus (says he) *Stands the Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel-History, with regard to the exact Knowledge the Writers had of their Subject* ; tho' I cannot but Observe too, how soon he has chang'd his Note. — Just now he would have it Believ'd, *Mark and Luke* were of the Inspir'd Disciples of *Jesus*, *Workers of Miracles*, and to have wrote of their own Knowledge and Experience: But now he is Content, if you will but admit 'em to be the *Pedisequi* of *Peter* and *Paul*, and to have Deriv'd their Knowledge from them. He has indeed the Enemy at all Advantage. — *Mark and Luke*, it seems, were either *Inspir'd* themselves, or They were Taught by those that were, and This is His Way of defending the *Divine Authority* of the *New Testament*.

Then, Lastly, As to the Character and Condition of their Persons, the *Letter-writer* Speaking generally of all the supposed Authors of the *New Testament*, says, ¹ — They were so far from being *Artful and Designing Men*, — That they were *Reproached by the Enemies of Christianity*, for being *Rude and Mean, Simple and Illiterate* ; and so far were They from having any *Worldly Views*, that *Persecution*, Af-

¹ *Past. Let. p. 13.*

fiction, and Reproach constantly attended them.

Now, First, That the Writers of the New Testament were *Rude and Mean, Simple and Illiterate*, which the *Letter-writer*, with most Divines, Affects to Acknowledge; This, One would think, is so far from being part of their Commendation, as 'tis commonly made, that *Infidels*, I am afraid will stick to it, that 'tis the greatest Objection possible to their being *Authors*, and therefore, if they were indeed *Rude and Mean, Simple and Illiterate*, the Reproach will be found to be but too well Grounded.

But after all, where is the Necessity, of *Divulging* again and again, the *Weaknesses* and *Incompetencies*, of the first *Doctors of Christianity*? Or where the *Piety*, or *Attachment* shewn to Our Excellent Religion, to be thus continually Aspersing its *Founders*, — and fixing to their Persons the base Characters of *Fools and Beggars*? Is not This to Expose it deservedly to the Scorn of *Unbelievers*, — and to the very same Home-Objection, *Christians* usually make to *Makometism*, viz. *That it had None but an Illiterate Blockhead for its Author*?

Then, Secondly, *That the Apostles had no Worldly Views*, tho' 'tis a Truth we are all Satisfy'd in, yet it cannot be Inferred, as the *Letter-writer* injuriously puts it, *from their being constantly Persecuted and Reproach'd,*

proach'd, but the contrary, *Shame and Punishment* frequently attending a too eager Pursuit after the *World*, never a Contempt of it. — But neither does the *Letter-writer* know the *Apostles* were actually *Reproach'd and Persecuted*, after they had left their own Country; and it seems to me, an Ugly Reflection upon their *Manners*, and the *Doctrines* they publish'd, to say they were ¹, — For (as St. Peter says) *If they were Followers of that which was Good, who could Harm them?*

But my Design not being to Trace the Gentleman, Step by Step, throughout his loose Defence, of the *whole Canon of the New Testament*, and with which too, This Treatise hath no Concern; I shall Confine the Inquiry to, and Seek no farther, than the *First Book* of that *Canon*. — And This, to Demonstrate in a Single Instance only, taken from the *Gospels*, which with the *Letter-writer*, it seems, are the least ² *disputable* Part of the *New Testament*: — That to Establish the said *Canon* against the Cavils of *Infidels* and *Heretics*, is not a Task so easy as the *Letter-writer's* Ostentatious, Careless Way of Treating the Subject, bears before it.

But before I Enter upon such *Inquiry*, I cannot but take Notice, that the *Letter-writer* Extracts his Proofs, for the *Inspiration* of the *New Testament*, not from the

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 13.

² Past. Let. p. 7.

Propriety and Excellency of the Subject Matter of its several Books, and from the evident *Marks* and *Signs*, they themselves happily *Afford*, of their own *Divinity*; but most an End, out of the *Fathers*.—Whereas, there is nothing more ridiculous, than to fly for Help to the *Fathers*, and Cite them forsooth, as good Evidence, for *The Word of God* against *Infidels*:—For besides that, *Infidels* will Object to the *Testimony* of those *Fathers*, as *Party-Bigots* every Man of them, and, as they Conceive, *Modellers* of that *Religion*, they are brought to Vindicate: So all know that are ever so little Acquainted with their Writings, That they are not to be Credited in the Relation, Scarce of any One single matter of Fact, for the many Negligences, Impertinencies, and Falshoods, that are found in them; Eat up as they were too, with the grossest Superstitions, and carry'd away with every Notion, which Coincided with those Superstitions.

The External, or Written Word of God, can have no other sure Test, than that of its own *Intrinsic Excellency* as it stands apparently conform to the *Divine Nature*, and to the *Nature and Reason of Things*, i. e. It must necessarily Prove itself,—and not be made to subsist, on the *Credit* of any Set of Men whatsoever:—But least of all on their *Credit*. The Major Part of whom, were they alive, would for their *Heresies*,
their

their Knavery, and Inexcusable Ignorance and Credulity, be the Shame and Blot of their own Profession. — But to Return to my Inquiry.

In pursuance of which I shall shew with all Freedom (for the Sake of Investigating the Truth) what *Heretics* and *Anti-scripturolists*, generally Urge against the *Authority* of Our *First Gospel*; which for the Reader's clearer Understanding, I shall Consider under the particular Heads following. And,

First, I will shew the Great Uncertainty (they think) we are under, as to the *True Author* of this *Gospel*; Secondly, I shall shew the *Occasion* of its being wrote; Thirdly, The *Time* when; Fourthly, I shall Inquire in what *Language* this same *Gospel* was wrote; And, Lastly, I shall Treat of its *Genuineness* and *Authority*, and the Grounds upon which *Heretics* have always Rejected it, and Number'd it among Apocryphal Writings. And,

First, That the Apostle *Matthew* compos'd a Gospel for the Use of the *Nazarens*, or first Converts of his own Country, is on all Hands, as well by *Heretical* as *Orthodox Christians* Admitted¹; but whether the *Gospel* we now have, bearing his Name, be the same which he wrote, with or without Interpolations, or Retrenchments, is with

¹ Vid. *Sim. Crit. Hist. N. T. Part 1. c. 1. Sand. E. H. p. 5. Edit. ult.*

Heretics, the Great and Difficult Question still remaining to be Solv'd.

It seems indeed pretty evident, That the Person who Affix'd the Title to this *Gospel*, whoever he was, intended it should be Understood to be, *The Gospel by Mathew the Apostle*, i. e. Not as Pen'd by the *Apostle's* own Hand, but by some other Person, from his Mouth or Teaching. — This, as most Think, is the true Import of the *Greek Title* which we follow.

Accordingly those Sects of *Christians*, who condemn this *Gospel* as Spurious, always deny'd, That the Title was any real Help to the Discovery of the *True Author* or *Composer*.

The *Greek Titles* to This, and the other *Gospels* (for they are all the same) Run thus, viz. ¹ — *The Gospel according to Mathew*, — *According to Mark*, &c. i. e. plainly (say the *Heretics*) according to their Teaching or Preaching, and by no Construction that they were themselves the *Writers*. For then, why should they not be Intitled. — The Gospel wrote or composed *by Mathew the Apostle* in the same distinct Manner as The *Epistles* are Intitled, — *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, &c. Besides, as there is but

¹ These Titles were Added, *Ex Solo Testimonio Hominum* (says Father Simon) and therefore will not Prove the Gospels were Composed by those, whose Names they Bear, in regard there was an Infinite Number of Forg'd Books, carrying the Names of the Apostles. Crit. Hist. N. T. Part 1. c. 2.

One and the same Form to the *Titles* of all the *Four Gospels*; 'tis Urg'd that they must needs have been Affix'd, by some foreign Hand ¹, as St. *Chrysostome* expressly Affures they were, and that, long after the said *Gospels* were Wrote, and Collected; and therefore *Heretics* insist, 'tis likely the Party who affix'd them, only Guess'd at the Matter, or he might set the *Titles* purposely to deceive, there being nothing more common (say they) in the Early Days of *Christianity*, than to send *Forgeries* Abroad under the most specious *Titles*, which nevertheless when they came to be Examined, Bewray'd themselves, having Nothing in them worthy those Holy Persons, whose Names they bore, and as 'tis certain these *Titles* were put all at the same Time, They could not proceed from the *Authors* themselves; for as the Holy Authors never ² us'd to give *Titles* to their own Works; so These are suppos'd to have liv'd and wrote, at great Distance of Time and Place, from each other, and therefore could not Conspire, to use the same Form of Words, had they Inclinations so to do, a Form too, as some have thought, in its Prime Intention Equivocal, pretending to Indicate the Authors Names, and yet not daring to do it in express Words.

¹ Hom. 1. in Epist. ad Roman.

² Non est Scriptorum Consuetudo, Ut ante Initium Librorum titulos ponant. *Maldonat. Com. c. 1. Math.* Vid. etiam *Crellium* in cap. 1. *Math.*

Where *Matthew the Apostle* is mentioned in this *Gospel*, which (I think) is but ¹ twice, He is in both Places mentioned incidentally in the *Third Person*, but say the Impugners of this *Gospel*, if the *Evangelist* had been the *Apostle*, He would have Spoke of himself with some *Note of Distinction*, and in the *First Person*, not in the *Third*,— Except he did it covertly, and with Intention to Conceal himself, for which no Reason can be assign'd; and 'tis very likely (fill'd as the *Apostle* was with the Divine Wisdom, and Writing to the *Jews*) That he would never have appropriated to himself, that Term of Reproach neither ², calling himself a *Publican*, contrary to the Natural Policy of all Authors, who have any Desire their Works should be Credited.

As the *Gospel* itself Affords no Light in this Matter, so the Good *Fathers* (whose Testimony to Oblige the *Letter-writer* we shall continue to use) These Help very little to Clear it up, all they say being Founded on no other ³ Evidence, than their own Credulity. *Irenæus*, who flourish'd not till towards the Conclusion of the *Second Cen-*

¹ Ch. ix. 9. x. 3.

² The Name as well as Office of a *Publican* was had in the utmost Detestation among all the *Jews*, so that a Book wrote by any under that Character would never be touch'd by them.

³ See Father *Simon* on this Head, who with the Rest of his Church, Resolves all into *Tradition*, without which join'd to the *Authority* of the Church (say they) we can have no Assurance, That any of the *Evangelists* were the Authors of their respective *Gospels*. Crit. Hist. c. 2.

ture, being the first Writer, who adventur'd to Cite *Matthew the Apostle* as Author of this *Gospel* by Name.—Indeed there is no other point of History (says the Adversary) more in dispute, than who should be the Author of Our present *Gospel*.

As is Evident further (continues the Adversary) by the many other different *Titles* and *Names* it bore in the very first Age of *Christianity*.—This *Gospel* now Attributed to *Matthew*, being presum'd to be the same, with that formerly intitled, *According to the Hebrews*: It is the same too, Divines Agree, with that which was some time Ascrib'd, to the *Twelve Apostles* in general. And at other times to some One *Apostle* in particular.—As to *Bartholomew*, to *James*, to *Peter*, and last of all to *Matthew*; it has at other times been imputed to single *Hereticks*, as the Authors of it, such as *Cerintus*, *Tatian*, &c. And again to whole *Sects*, such as the *Nazarens*, the *Ebionites*, the *Encratites*, and the like.—All which different Denominations sufficiently Evince, that the *Antients* were utterly at a Loss, to whom to Ascribe this *Gospel*.—*Adeo Impossibile est* (says a learned¹ Historian) *de eo certi aliquid definire*.

¹ Sand. E. H. p. 5. Where also the Author learnedly shews, That our present *Gospel* of *Matthew*, is not only different to That Antiently intitled *According to the Hebrews*,—But to that also intitled *According to Matthew*, Us'd by the Antients.—*Aliud Antiquis fuisse Evangelium Mathei ab eo, quo hodie Utimur*.

Nevertheless,

Nevertheless, This great uncertainty, with respect to the Author, is no where Urg'd singly by the Adversary, that I know, as a reason, why this *Gospel* shou'd be actually excluded the *Canon*, since 'tis certain many Books are now there, whose *Authors* are as little Known, and consequently of whose *Divine Authority* the Church could never have perfect Assurance; because to be Assur'd thereof She ought first to have evident Proofs, not only of the *Author*, but that He was Influenc'd by the *Holy Spirit*.

For Example, ¹ *Holy Church* has been always in doubt, who compos'd the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, that of *James*, the *Second of Peter*, the *Second and Third of John*, the *Epistle of Jude*, and the *Book of Revelations*; Not to mention the *Gospel* we are now Treating of, Nor the Scruples she has, with regard to several Books of the *Old Testament*, which however she thinks fit to retain, in her Catalogue of the *Sacred Writings*; making therefore an evident distinction, between Books properly only ² *Canonical*, and properly *Divine*.

As the *Author of Mathew's Gospel* is thought very uncertain, the *Occasion* of its

¹ Euseb. E. H. lib. 3. c. 3 & 25.

² The Distinction of Sacred Books into *Canonical*, and *Apocryphal*, was first Invented by *Heretics*, to which the *Church* after some time was oblig'd to Yeild.—Each Party Espousing those Scriptures as *Canonical*, in which their peculiar Tenets were to be found, the rest they Term'd *Apocryphal*, or *Deutro-Canonical*, suffering them to be Read not only at *Home*, but in *Public Assemblies*.

being Wrote is no less so; which is my *second Head of Inquiry*. All we can gather (say its Adversaries) from among Historians concerning This, is from *Eusebius*, who, they think, gives but a scurvy Account of this matter; for as 'tis very remarkable, that Our *Saviour* wrote Nothing himself, nor left any Directions for Writing to his *Disciples*, No, not after his *Resurrection*; so according to ¹ *Eusebius*, Neither the *Twelve Apostles*, nor *Seventy Disciples*, were much Inclined to Write Books; He says *Matthew* and *John* only, have left us any written *Memoirs* (or *Historical Gospels*) and further, that even these Two, were compell'd to Write what they did, (by their Auditors, he means) *Matthew* in particular by the *Hebrews*, when he was upon the Point, of Setting out on his Travels, to Preach the Gospel to the *Gentiles*.

By which This *Father* would unhappily insinuate, That neither *Matthew*, nor *John* Wrote of their own Inclination, or Free Motion of the *Holy Ghost*; but that they were Oblig'd thereto by their own *Disciples* against their Will; which hath given Occasion to *Libertines*, to say, These *Disciples* had the Propagation of *Christianity* more at Heart, and consequently had more of the *Holy Ghost* in them, than their Teachers.

¹ E. H. lib. 3. c. 24.

The *Time* when This *Gospel* was wrote too, which is the next *Head of Inquiry*, is a Point, of as great Difficulty to be settled, as any other: *Heretics* say, We can bring but One of all the *Antients*, who hath Assign'd any *Time* at all for it, and that is *Irenæus*, who, by the way, is not very Explicit; all he says to it is ¹, *That Mathew Publish'd his Gospel when Peter and Paul were at Rome*, which the most accurate *Chronologers* Place in the Year ² 64, at soonest. — For then (say they) The Persecution under *Nero* began at *Rome*, some time in which Those *Two Apostles* are suppos'd to have suffer'd together: — But some thinking This Account of *Irenæus*, somewhat of the latest; pretend to collect from *Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History*, That *Mathew* Wrote in the Year 41. But *Eusebius* says no more, Than ³ that *Mathew* having first Preach'd to the *Hebrews*, and being about to Go and Preach to the *Gentiles*, wrote his *Gospel*, &c. — Nevertheless, They who would oppose *Eusebius* to *Irenæus*, Conjecture, That this same Going, or Departure of *Mathew* from *Jerusalem*, must needs have happen'd in the Year 41, Or Eight

¹ *Iren. adv. Hæres. lib. 3. c. 1.*

² Vid. *Du Pin E. H. Vol. I. c. 5.* Who is particular to this Point. — *Platina* says, *Peter* and *Paul* suffer'd, *Anno Domini* 70, or thirty seven Years after the Crucifixion, the same Year in which *Jerusalem* was taken and demolish'd. *Eachard* says, this Persecution began in 65. *Rom. Hist. Nero's Reign.*

³ *Euseb. E. H. lib. 3. c. 24.* Vid. *Mill. Prolegom. p. 7. N^o. 61.*

Years after the *Ascension*; Their only Ground for which is, That it was the same Year, in which the *Apostles* were *Illuminated*, and made to know, That the *Gospel* was to be Preach'd to the *Gentiles*, but I am asham'd to lay any Stress upon a Conjecture so very precarious.

Let Us suppose for Argument Sake, That *Eusebius* hath Assign'd a *Time* for the *Writing* this *Gospel*, but different to That of *Irenæus*; yet how should we help Closing with *Irenæus* (though a Simple Man) and contend, that he must needs have been better Acquainted with this Matter of Fact, than *Eusebius*, who liv'd near *Two Hundred* Years after him, and *Three Hundred* after the Fact in Controversy: Besides, that 'tis an unanswerable Objection, to any Authority of *Eusebius*, That he could have no Intelligence of this Matter, but from *Irenæus* only; No other Ecclesiastical Writer, that we Know of, having fix'd any *Time*, for the Writing this *Gospel*.——I may add too, That all the *Roman Catholic* Divines, are for the Account given by *Irenæus*; but some Protestants have Scrupled of mere Superstition, — “ As
 “ Imagining it inconsistent with Divine
 “ Providence to permit, that the Churches
 “ for so long a space of Time, as this
 “ of *Thirty* Years or more, should be
 “ left destitute of an Authentic History,

“ of the Miracles, and Doctrines of Christ:
 “ And; forasmuch as God always Acts (say
 “ they) by Natural Means, so they con-
 “ ceive, no Memory sufficient, to retain
 “ such a Number of *Facts, Sermons, Doc-*
 “ *trines, Promises, Prophecies,* and cursory
 “ *Sayings of Christ,* so long a Time, with-
 “ out great Omission; neither dare they
 “ presume, upon so long a Neglect of the
 “ *Apostles,* and Governours of the Church,
 “ to commit the *History of Jesus* to Writ-
 “ ing, which at the same Time is to sup-
 “ pose them, very defective in their Zeal
 “ for *Christianity,* or else Ignorant of the
 “ most likely means to promote it.”

But what are These mere *Arguments of*
Convenience only to a stubborn Matter of
 Fact, and which (say the *Roman Divines*)
Protestants do not See, bear with stronger
Emphasis against the Conduct of *Jesus*
Christ himself, than of his *Apostles,* who
 (as is said) left them no Directions to
 Write, and what is most admirable, wrote
 nothing himself; tho’ he must needs for-
 see (say *Libertines*) That such Omission
 would be attended with bad Consequen-
 ces; for they presume a *Gospel* composed
 by the Divine *Jesus,* must have anticipat-
 ed all Sects, and consequently all Hatred
 and Persecution among *Christians,* which
 hath reduc’d them to such narrow Bounds
 in the World; and *Pagans* then should
 have

have had no Occasion to say ¹, — *We will not Believe Jesus's Gospel, because it was not wrote by Jesus himself.* But to the point.—

Eusebius having (as is said) no other Father or Historian from whom he could take his Account of *Matthew's* Time of Writing, but from *Irenæus* only; there is no Question (had he Assign'd any Time) but that he would have concurr'd with him: For it appears he was very conversant with *Irenæus's* Writings, and often Copy'd his Words from him, as particularly, he does this Account of *Matthew's* Time of Writing in his ² *Ecclesiastical History*, and which 'tis likely he acquiesc'd in; for else why did he not Censure it there, or Contradict it rather, in his *Chronicon*, where he is wholly Silent.

It Appears then, according to Father *Irenæus* (a Witness after the *Letter-writer's* own Heart) That *St. Matthew's Gospel*, the First of the Four, was not Wrote till at least *Sixty Four*, or *Sixty Five Years* after Our Saviour's *Nativity*, and above *Thirty Years* after his *Crucifixion*; notwithstanding, the *Letter-writer* expressly maintains ³, *That not only This, but all the other Gospels were Wrote and Publish'd too, while the Matiers were fresh in Memory, and while many Persons were Living, who wanted not*

¹ *Nolunt Evangelio, Credere, Quia non ab ipso Jesu illa conscripta sunt. Aug. Retract. lib. 2. c. 16.*

² *Lib. 5. c. 8.*

³ *Past. Let. p. 14.*

Inclination, to detect the Evangelists, if they could have been convicted of Falshood; and tho' he knows too, That One of the Gospels (even that according to John) was not compos'd, till near Seventy Years after Our Saviour's Decease, and an Hundred Years after his Nativity; and further-also, that the Sacred Writings of the New Testament could not be ¹ obtained by the Heathens, but thro' Force and Stealth, for above Two Hundred Years longer.

But I come now, Fourthly, to *Inquire in what Language This same Gospel, Intituled, According to Mathew, was originally compil'd.*

To this, *Papias* (the Antient Bishop of *Hierapolis*) says ², *That Mathew Wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, — And* ³ *Irenæus* after him, *That Mathew delivered to the Hebrews the History of the Gospel, Wrote in their own Language, so* ⁴ *Origen*, so ⁵ *Eusebius*, so also ⁶ *Jerom*; and so in general, all the *Fathers* to a Man, all agreeing to the same Tradition.

¹ Those *Christians* who delivered up their Gospels to the *Heathens*, tho' they did it under the utmost Threats of Torments and Death; yet, were thereafter Branded with the Infamous Name of *Traditores*, i. e. Givers up, or Betrayers of the Mysteries, and for which they did severe *Penance*, and were made incapable of the *Priesthood*.

² Apud *Euseb.* E. H. l. 3. c. 39.

³ Adv. *Hæres.* l. 3. c. 1.

⁴ Apud *Euseb.* E. H. l. 6. c. 25.

⁵ Ib. l. 3. c. 24.

⁶ *Jerom.* Proœm. in Com. Math.

Not-

Notwithstanding which, some *Modern Critics* of great Authority, Namely, *Erasmus*, *Cardinal Cajetan*, *OEcolampadius*, *Flaccius Illyricus*, *Calvin*, *Vossius*, &c. among Foreigners; and *Dr. Lightfoot*, *Dr. Whitby*, the Reverend *Mr. Jones*, and others of Our own Nation, (not regarding the *Fathers*) have Oppos'd the aforementioned *Tradition*, Endeavouring to prove on the Foot of *Critics* and learned Observations, That the *Gospel* we now have according to *Matthew*, was certainly deriv'd from some *Greek Original*, there being nothing more easy (say they) than to Distinguish always, between a *Transcript*, and a *Translation*:— And then as to the *Hebrew Text* of this *Gospel*, found in the Fifth Century, by *St. Jerom*, in Custody of the *Nazaren-Christians* of *Berea* and *Cæsarea*, Cities in *Palestine*; and which were then supposed to be *Copies of Matthew's Original*: These (they imagine) not to have been *Copies*, but an *Early Translation* from the *Original Greek*, made by the *Apostles* for the Use of the *Nazarens*; The *Holy Ghost* descending on them for that Purpose; and as to the *Greek Text* now Extant, This they suppose to be a *True Copy* of that *Original*, wrote by *St. Matthew's* own Hand, preserv'd by an extraordinary Providence; which Notion of these Great Men, as it hath no Foundation in History, so hath it the worst Tendency imaginable, as will
Appear

appear hereafter, and is vastly absurd in this respect, as it supposes the *Rude and Illiterate Mathew* to have wrote to his Countrymen the *Jews*, in a *learned polite Language*, which neither *They*, nor 'tis likely *Himself*¹ understood; and This too, when he Wrote at their Request, and for their more particular Use; and that when he had so done, They were necessitated to get his *Gospel* Translated by the other *Apostles*, (Heav'n Interposing) before they could make any Use of it.

Mathew the Apostle, is generally agreed to have been a *Jew*, and that he compos'd his *Gospel*, for the Sake of the *Jews*; now can it be conceiv'd, supposing him properly qualified, that he should on this Occasion, compliment Foreigners, more than his own Countrymen, and shew all his Regard for their Churches, and none for those of his own Nation; a Partiality certainly a *Jew*, could never be Guilty of?

¹ It has been the Opinion of Great Divines, the Apostles did not Learn *Greek* by Inspiration; *Peter* had his Interpreter, and so had *Paul*. — Nay, *Paul* fairly owns himself ignorant in the *Greek*, 2 *Cor.* xi. 6. which it seems, tho' Born in a *Grecian City*, by his long Stay in *Judea*, he had in great Measure forgot.

Dum Excuso Apostolos (says Erasmus) *Qui Græcitatem suam, non ex Orationibus Demosthenis, sed ex Vulgi colloquio Didicerint; non nego Donum Linguarum, neque tamen inde Sequitur, eos non potuisse Græcè discere ex Vulgi colloquio.* — Then follows, — *Quod si contendis hanc Græcitatem quam Videmus in Apostolicis Literis, esse Donum Cæleste. — Unde tanta Sermonis Ruditas, imò Barbaries, quam Dissimulare non possumus?* Epist. ad Eckium.

Nor

Nor will any One believe, the *Holy Ghost* Inspir'd *Matthew* on this Occasion, purpose-ly to Write in *Greek*, contrary to his ap-parent Duty and End of Writing; or, if you will say, the Gift of Tongues was Constant and Uniform, is not writing or Preaching to a People in a *Strange Lan-guage*, a fore *Abuse* of that Gift, Invert-ing the End for which it was bestow'd?

But *Greek*, say these *Protestant Divines*, was the more *Universal Language*; which Implies again, that *Matthew* did not Write, at the Request, and for the more peculiar Use of the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*; for if so, He was not to regard the *Universality of a Language*, but he was to Write in that *Language* only, which the People, at whose Instance, and for whose Instruction He immediately Wrote, Understood; Common Decency should have taught *Matthew* this, tho' not Inspir'd, and how *Rude* and *Illiterate* soever: The *Jews* certainly should have their own Gospel in their own *Lan-guage*, the *Language* in which it had been Preach'd, by this same *Apostle* to them, and let the *Greeks* afterwards Translate it, if they thought fit, and had not pa-tience to Stay, for those other *Gospels* which the *Holy Apostle* foresaw, and might declare would shortly be compos'd for them in their own Dialect.

Indeed, *Protestant Divines*, after all their *Critics*, are so Ingenuous, as to let you
F know,

know, why they Labour this Point so heartily; not that any One Fact arises in History, to Determine them in That, of which they would seem persuaded; but for that They are apprehensive, if the Thing was so, I mean, if this *Gospel* was Originally compiled in *Hebrew*, that then its Authority would be more dubious; the *Original Text* being lost, and even the *Copies* of that *Original* which (they Think too) *Providence* would never suffer.

But why did it suffer it to be corrupted, as most agree it was, and that as soon almost, as it came into the *Nazaren's* Islands? And if That be the Case, 'tis scarce worth the disputing now, in what *Language* it was Wrote; Again, Suppose it compos'd in *Greek*, yet will it not thence follow, Our present *Greek-Text* is more pure, Since it is not known, nor was so long since as¹ St. *Jerom's* time, from whence That sprung.

If the *Original* was Wrote in *Greek*, and deliver'd to the *Nazarens*, 'tis not likely, they would Part with it to the *Gentiles* (their Avow'd Enemies) to make Copies by; 'tis infinitely more probable, that having caus'd it to be Translated into *Hebrew* with Amendments for their own general Use,

¹ *Matheus primus in Judæa, propter eos, qui ex Circumcisione Crediderunt, Evangelium Christi Hebraicis Literis Verbisque composuit; quod quis postea in Græcum transtulerit, non satis certum est. Hieron. de Script. Eccl. in Math.*

some Copies of that *Hebrew Translation* in process of Time, unavoidably stole abroad, and fell into the Hands of the *Gentile Christians*; who reduc'd it again, into the *Greek* we now have; as we are intirely in the Dark in this Affair; this Conjecture seem much more Rational, than to Imagine with all those, who pretend Our present Copies are deriv'd from a *Greek Original*, that the *Jewish Christians* were in Hast, to Transmit Authentic Copies to the *Gentiles*, of their own Original in its first Purity, even before They had serv'd themselves with it.

Upon the whole, notwithstanding all has been said, on this Head, by *Modern Divines*; most think that Our present *Gospel*, is on a much better Foot of *Credit*, supposing it deriv'd from a *Hebrew Original*, than if we should allow it composed in *Greek*; because in the latter case, we shall be forc'd to confess it, a different *Gospel* to that, which *St. Mathew* certainly composed, even a Counterfeit, Palm'd on Us in its stead; for be Our *Greek Text* from whence it will, that the *Apostle* wrote in *Hebrew* to the *Jews*, who spake *Hebrew*, was a Fact so Notorious to the *Antients*, so well Attested, so Universally Assented to, and so Natural to be True, that there is no withstanding it; the Tradition is Trac'd up, very near to the Time of the *Holy Apostle* himself, and downward again

for above Fifteen Hundred Years together, without Interruption ; therefore, after such a continued Train of Evidence, for some *Moderns*, (of whom I think *Erasmus* was the first) to come now and say, and stick to it, upon the Foot of *Critics* only, that the *Original* of Our present *Gospel*, was certainly *Greek* ; what is it but in other Words to Affirm, it is not the same with *St. Mathew's* (as the *Heretics* always asserted) and consequently that a *Spurious Gospel* hath been imposed on us ?

I come now to my *Fifth and last Head*, which is to consider more nearly, *the Genuineness and Authority of Mathew's Gospel, and the Grounds upon which it was antiently, and is now, rejected by some Heretics.*

In Treating of which, I shall be Oblig'd to repeat some things already said, in regard, This Head bears so near a Relation, to those that went before.

Now to be satisfy'd of the Truth of any History, the Impugners of this *Gospel*, and the *Letter-writer* are well agreed ; that it is requisite we should know, First, *Somewhat of the Author's Character* ; Secondly, *Whether the same* (if Antient) *hath been faithfully Transmitted down to Us* ; And, Lastly, Its *Authority* will depend in great measure too, *Upon its own Intrinsic Evidence*, with regard to the Reasonableness and Credibility of Facts therein related. — We have seen,

First,

First, On what a precarious Foot (in the Opinion of those who oppose this Gospel) the same stands with respect to its *Author*, whose very Name is not certainly known, so many *Authors* (say they) was this *Gospel* from the Beginning ascribed to, So many *Titles* it bore, and so *Questionable* is its present Title, that we can by no *Criterion*, arrive to any Certainty, who the Writer was; Nay, was its Title never so express, so many Forgeries were Obtruded upon the World, in the *Apostles* Names, That this neither would not be satisfactory, in a Matter of so great Importance, without some further Evidence corroborating it.

But History they tell you Affords none of that kind, till at least One *hundred Years*, after the pretended *Publication* of Our present *Gospel*; Father *Irenæus* (as Observed) being the first Ecclesiastical Writer of all those whose Works are now extant, that cites *Matthew the Apostle* by Name as the Author of it.

Now (say *Heretics*) the little Account we ought to make of his Testimony, in this Particular, appears hence, That 'tis founded upon the Tradition, he received from *Papias*, whose Scholar he was,—*A Man* (says ¹ *Eusebius*) of *Weak Judgment*, *A fabulous Author*, and One who led many into Error, and particularly his Pupil *Irenæus*; so that upon this Fool and Knave both

¹ E. H. l. 3. c. 39.

(accorditg to *Eusebius*) doth the whole Tradition, of *Matthew's* being the Author of the *Gospel* we now make Use of, depend.

For as *Irenæus* had it from 'Old *Papias*, so *Eusebius* plainly took it from them both, Notwithstanding his bad Opinion of the Men; and to these all the following *Church Writers* venture to subscribe, without any Disquisition, as appears, into the Fact; and this is the goodly Evidence (say the *Heretics*) which we *Orthodox Believers*, have been all along taught to Confide in; and which having been so often objected to Us, in Triumph by the Adversary, 'Tis much to be wondred, the *Letter-writer* should pass it over, without Offering to furnish the World, with some more Material Evidence in its stead, Especially in an Affair of the highest Concern,—As whether the Books of the *New Testament*, One or other of them, were wrote by those, They are pretended to be wrote, and consequently by Divine Inspiration.

Indeed the present *Gospel* (say the same Persons) should for Distinction sake, be term'd, *The Gospel by Matthew According to the Gentiles*; for there was another *Gospel* (say they) extant in the *Primitive Church*, which all the first Converts made Use of, and ascribed to *Matthew's* Writing, And which therefore was commonly called, by way of Distinction — *The Gospel by Matthew*

Matthæw According to the Hebrews; “ This
 “ *Gospel* (said the *Hebrews*) is the same,
 “ which You *Gentiles* acknowledge, the
 “ *Apostle* wrote for Our Use, and at Our
 “ Request, and deliver’d to us the Ori-
 “ ginal, the same which we kept sacred
 “ among our Selves for near five hundred
 “ Years together, When You *Gentiles* de-
 “ stroyed, both Copies and Translations,
 “ to take off all Rivalship, as it should
 “ seem, between the two *Gospels*, And
 “ that Yours alone might Reign with-
 “ out Competition”.

This (Say Our Opposers) is what the
Jewish Christians always urged; and we
 see with what Justice, They gave the Pre-
 cedence to their own *Gospel*. — “ Ours (said
 “ they) was the Original, We had the keep-
 “ ing of it all along, We claim it by your
 “ own Confession,” *The Verity of an Act al-*
ways precedes the Corruption of the same.

To Obviate this *Jewish* Objection, some
¹ *Moderns* have feigned, That the *Apostle*
Matthæw did indeed publish Two Editions
 of his *Gospel*, The first in *Hebrew* for the
Jews, but the last and most correct in
Greek for Us *Gentiles* — This indeed is
 an Answer, But (says the Adversary) ’tis
 at the Expence of all Sincerity and good
 Reading, there being no Foundation for it,

¹ Sixt. Senens. Bibl. Sac. lib. 7. p. 385. *Whitby’s* Preface
 to the four *Gospels*. *Nye’s* Defence of the Sacred Canon a-
 gainst *Toland*, p. 78.

either in History or Oral Tradition ; 'Tis an Expedient the Fathers, rich in Inventions, never hit on ; for they submitted always the whole Authority of this *Gospel*, to *Papias* and *Irenæus* ; And Chose to say the Gentile-Copy of *Matbew*, was the only *True One*, the same with that of the *Hebrew-Christians*, before the latter was Interpolated and Corrupted.

Tho' Others again have been of Opinion, The *Nazaren Gospel* was absolutely distinct from it, Or *St. Jerom* never would have Translated it into *Greek* and *Latin*.

But this breaks in upon what I would Consider next, which is, *How faithfully the Gospel compiled by Saint Matbew hath been Transmitted down to Us*.

In Relation to which, its *Enemies* will be apt to observe, That if what the *Antients* unanimously affirm, *viz.* That the *Apostle Matbew* composed his *Gospel* in *Hebrew*, is to be depended on ; Then the *Gospel* we now make Use of, according to some *Moderns* of great Name, cannot be the same, but Another whose Original, it seems, was *Greek* ; They will tell us, we have lost *Matbew's Hebrew Gospel*, and a *Greek One* is Transmitted to us in its stead, of whose *Authority* we know nothing.

But again, should it be supposed, Those *Moderns* are mistaken, and that the *Gospel* we now have, is the same with that mentioned by the *Fathers* (the Original of which
was

was *Hebrew*) yet, the same *Fathers* tell You, the *Nazarens* began to Stuff it very soon with their own *Inventions*; and that the *Ebionite Gospel* too (another Branch of it) was still more *corrupt*:—Notwithstanding which, and that he knows the *Herc-tics* insist, That this is the Voice of all Anti-quity, yet the *Letter-writer* contents himself with barely Asserting, ¹ *That this* (among the other *Gospels*) *hath been faithfully Trans-mitted to Christians of succeeding Ages*; Of-fering no Proof, — But putting it upon *Infidels* rather to Prove it for him, and to shew, *That any other Book whatsoever, has such, and so many plain, and strong Testi-monies of a faithful Transmission, as the New Testament.* — And in order to induce them thereto (and I dare say, with no Design to Insnare them) he Assures them the Coasts are all clear ². — *Christianity* (says he) *Requires no farther Favour, than a fair and Impartial Inquiry into the Grounds and Doctrines of it*:— But *Infidels* and *Here-tics* both having tried the Spirit of (some people's) *Christianity*, and Smarted so often, for Trusting to Invitations of this sort, care not, I see (after long Expectation) to ven-ture. — I shall only take upon me to say (who always held the *Books of the New Testament* in the utmost *Veneration* till the last *Pastoral Letter* flung Doubts in my way) *That the Faithful Transmission* which the *Letter-writer* contends for (if we respect

¹ Past. Let. p. 63.

² First Past. Let. p. 54.

Matthew's Gospel only) can never be made fairly to appear, from Ecclesiastical History only, it being impossible in the Nature of the Thing, admitting, as that does, the *Original* of it to have been *corrupted*, which is the Case of no one profane Author, that I know of; or if you will assert, the *Hebrew Original* remain'd intire, till such time, as a Transcript, or else Our present Version was made from it; yet how shall that appear? No one *Gentile Father* having ever seen, or pretended to have seen, which is much, *Matthew's Original*; and therefore it was impracticable to compare and rectify either Transcript or Version by it, or be assur'd whether it was true or false; so that I am afraid *Heretics* will insist, That this is *Argumentum ad Ignorantiam* only, or a mere Assertion rather, without either Proof or Probability.

If old *Papias* is good for any thing, he may serve to refell all pretence to a Fact, in which he could not well be mistaken.— He liv'd after the Commencement of the *second Age*, long after *Matthew's Gospel* is suppos'd to have been publish'd; and what he says to it is, ¹ *That Matthew having wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, every one Interpreted it, as he was able.*— Upon which Words a late ² Learned and Worthy Divine of our own Church, naturally observes, — *That*

¹ Apud Euseb. E. H. lib. 3. c. 39.

² *Hort's* Preface to the four Gospels.

Papias knew nothing of any Authentic Version of Mathew's Gospel, approv'd by the Apostles, and look'd upon in his Time, as Canonical by the Church ; but if the Gentile Church had obtain'd no One approv'd Version so late, i. e. Not till after the Beginning of the second Century (before which time 'tis universally allow'd the Nazarens had corrupted their Original) Heretics will ask from whose Hands, or by what Means or Testimony, she could procure it afterwards, except only by a New Revelation ?

The Truth is, — The Original Hebrew being a Sacred Depositum in the Hands of the Nazarens ; the Gentiles must have been content, with such a Copy or Version, as those People thought fit to allow them ; and if they were so very Intent (as most agree) upon Corrupting, with their own Additions, even the Original itself ; is it likely, They would oblige the Gentile Christians (their bitter Enemies) with a truer Copy than they had themselves ? Or with a Version more pure than their own Original ? Few Heretics will believe this.

That these Two Gospels, viz. That we have at present, and the Nazaren did indeed differ very materially from each other, is a Fact that appears even at this Day ; since many of the Various Readings in the Nazaren-Gospel (or Interpolations, if you had rather call them) are now extant, having been collected out of the Fathers with

great Pains by several *learned* ¹ *Hands*.—Tho' these do not at all help us out in our present Inquiry, for the Question still remains, whether These are indeed *Interpolations*, or rather part of the *Original Gospel*? Or whether those first Converts, and Contemporaries with the *Apostles*, if they did add or interpolate, had not good Reason and Authority for so doing? ² As many learned Men suppose they had. And if so, then (says the Adversary) it will follow, supposing both *Gospels* had the same *Original*, that our present *Copies* are Retrench'd, or not so faithfully Transmitted as they ought to have been.

After all, 'tis a melancholy Thing, Ecclesiastical Writers should agree, The *Original* itself of *Matthew's Gospel* was at any time *corrupted*; since if the Thing were so, the same will amount even to a Demonstration, That the first Converts (the Corrupters) never 'Believ'd it of *Divine Inspiration*; but knew it rather, to have been compil'd, by One among themselves, not only liable to Mistake, but who had actually Mistaken, in those Facts or Points to which they so readily; and without Scruple made Alterations; for what else could determine those *Christians*, to Alter and Adulterate a *Gospel*, which was wrote to oblige themselves, by an inspired *Apostle* too, and a Friend of their own choosing? There-

¹ Vid. Fabritii Cod. Apocryph. N. T. &c. p. 356—371.

² Vid. Sim. Crit. Hist. N. T. Part I. c. 7.

Therefore that They corrupted it at all seems to me (I confess) a mere Slander of the *Gentile Fathers*, without Foundation, in order to magnify their own Gospel; in regard great *Encomiums* are given the *Nazaren Gospel*, as well by those who have thought it a *distinct Original*, as by those who have conceiv'd it of the *same Origin* with Our present Gospel.

“ The First believe it was an honest
 “ Composure, not by a single Hand, but
 “ by a Council, or Collection of *Jewish*
 “ Converts at *Jerusalem*, soon after Our
 “ Saviour's *Ascension*, and some time before
 “ St. *Matthew's*, or any other of our pre-
 “ sent Canonical Gospels appeared, and
 “ therefore to be prefer'd to them; and
 “ that the most antient *Fathers* receiv'd it
 “ among other the Inspir'd Writings.

“ The Latter say boldly, That our pre-
 “ sent *Greek Text* is of no Validity, but to
 “ be esteem'd rather Apocryphal, in respect
 “ to the *Old Hebrew* of the *Nazarens*; they
 “ lament therefore exceedingly the Loss of
 “ it, as the greatest Mischief that could
 “ possibly have befallen the *Christian Church*,
 “ wishing it were now extant, as it was
 “ beyond all Doubt, the most antient Act
 “ of the *Christian Religion*, and consequent-
 “ ly should be the only Means, if we had
 “ it, by which we might Correct our pre-
 “ sent *Greek Version*, which (they think) at
 “ the best is but a bad One; the Transla-
 “ tor

“ tor (whoever he was) having assum’d
 “ strange Liberties, in Epitomizing it, and
 “ giving us rather the Sense than the
 “ Words.”— So Unfaithfully has it been
 Transmitted to us.—For the Sake of those
 who may be curious to know the Great
¹ Names, of one or other Persuasion, I have
 inserted them in the Margin, as collected
 out of Father *Simon*, *Sixtus Senensis*, *Grabe*,
 and other Learned *Authors*.

To say no more on this Head, if the
Gospel we now have according to *Matthew*,
 was wrote Originally in *Greek*, as so many
 learned Men contend, let us consider once
 again freely and impartially, what must be
 the Consequence, and upon what a very
 uncertain Foundation it manifestly stands.

Not only it is Agreed, the *Original Greek*
 was never so much as heard of, referr’d to,
 or mentioned, by any one Christian Writer,
 as then Existing any where; but the im-
 mediate *Hebrew Translation* also of that
Greek hath been missing, ever since St.
Jerome’s time, or very soon after, (that
 is) above 1300 Years past; So that now
 what the *English Church* makes use of, and
 builds her Faith upon, and which is called
 particularly in the Front of our Testa-
 ments; *A Translation out of the Original*

¹ *Epiphanius*, *Jerome*, *Bede*, *Baronius*, Father *Simon*, *Sixtus Senensis*, Dr. *Grabe*, *Toland*, *Nyc*, *Le Clerc*, *Fabritius*, Mr. *Richardson*, Dr. *Mill*, *Du Pin*, &c.— See also A. B. *Wake*’s Preliminary Discourse to his Translation of the Apostolical Fathers, Chap. 10. Sect. 4.

Greek, is in Truth no other, than what is generally reputed by our present learned Clergy, — *A very faulty Translation, from a¹ modern Greek Edition, of a bad Greek Translation, out of the lost Hebrew Translation, from a Greek Original that was never seen.* — Not to mention that the Author of Our said *Greek Translation* (bad as it is) was never known, to any one of the *Fathers*, no not to the inquisitive *Jerome* himself; which therefore put him upon Translating the *Nazaren Gospel* (in his Time extant) into *Greek* and *Latin*. — But which Translations together with their Original were never more heard of.

From what has been offer'd therefore upon the Two last Positions, or Heads, it may be observ'd. — That the *Heretics* the Impugners of our present *Gospel of Matthew*, proceed upon other Considerations, than the *Letter-writer* seems willing to apprehend; They argue, that either it was not deriv'd from *St. Matthew's* Genuine *Hebrew*, and consequently is an *Apocryphal Gospel*, or if it be, that it was *Interpolated* from the Beginning according to *Church-Tradition*, or last of all it hath been *Retrench'd*, as say others, and *Epitomis'd* by the *Translator*; and this long before it came into the Hands

¹ *Robert Stephens*, Printer at *Paris*, who Publish'd New Editions of the *Greek Testament*, *Annis* 1550, 1551. which our last Translators of the *New Testament* chiefly follow'd.

of any of those *Gentile Fathers*, from whom he takes his Accounts of it.

They easily submit to the *Letter-writer's* fine Reasoning, ¹ *That after Christianity was carry'd into almost all parts of the Roman Empire, and Copies of the New Testament spread with it, and not only remain'd in the Hands of numbers of private Christians, but were publickly received and read in Religious Assemblies; ----* which (by the way) could not be, till towards the End of the Fourth Century: That then indeed, it had been in vain, for a private Christian, to have attempted any considerable Alteration in his Copy, without being found out, and exploded by others, (tho' some Alterations we know were made, found out, and exploded, and yet Continu'd) But, I say, the Adversary is not averse to admit the Argument on this Head; What he urges with respect to Our present *Gospel* is, that supposing it truly deriv'd from St. *Matthew's Hebrew*, (which the Learned we see very much suspect,) yet was it grievously *Adulterated* in its very *Original*, or else Abridg'd by its Translator whilst in private Hands. In either of which Cases, the few Arguments which the *Pastoral Letter-writer* hath brought, for the faithful Transmission of this particular *Gospel* (among others) will be found of no Force.

As to the *Various Readings*, in a *Gospel*, the whole of which is suspected to be *Apo-*

¹ Pastoral Letter, p. 64.

cryphal, I do not find the Adversary triumphs much in that respect; tho' it has been observed by some *Critics*, that in this *Gospel* alone, which consists of about 1100 *Verses*, there are to be found no less than 1000 *Various Readings*. Which to speak the Truth, with ¹ Dr. *Whitby*, are enough to make the Mind doubtful, and a little Apprehensive, that nothing certain can be expected from a Book, where there are Alterations in every Verse, and almost in every Part of every Verse.

Therefore upon the whole I am afraid, Those who oppose the *Canonical Authority* of this particular *Gospel*, will be apt to insist, That as the Authors of all profane Writers, of any Note, are, and have ever been, universally assented to, without Dispute, which is far from being the Case of the Author here examin'd: So neither are there ² any such plain and strong Testimonies for the unfaithful Transmission of any of those *Writings*, as there are of this *Gospel*; and consequently, upon these two Accounts, that they may fairly Reject the latter as *Apocryphal*, without ³ Involving themselves in the Absurdity of Rejecting all Antient *Writings whatsoever*. For besides (I say) that they think their Authors certain, we have no such plain Evidence for their *Adulteration*; as neither was it ever the In-

¹ Exam. Var. Lect. Mill. p. 3.

² Past. Let. p. 63.

³ Ibidem.

terest of any Set of Men so egregiously to *Corrupt them* in Support of Private Opinions. — That which makes the immense Difference between the *Sacred*, and *Profane* Writings, and causes a restless Bickering with, and Scrutiny into, the former is this, — That tho' we are told our Salvation depends, upon their most exact Truth and Certainty, yet the *Priests* will not permit *Honest Men*, to make use of their Understandings, with the same ¹ *Freedom*, when they read *these*, as they take upon themselves always to do, when they read a *Profane Author*, tho' there is so much the greater Reason for it; the *Clergy*, for Instance, of the *Church of England* (the most Learned in the World) tho' they know the *Sacred Scriptures* have doubtful Books in them, and have been moreover horridly ¹ *Abus'd* with respect even to some *Essentials*; and tho' they allow, there are above 30,000 *Various Readings* in them, many of them of Importance, yet with their good Will, they would tye Men down still, to an implicit Belief of every Book, and every Period, or Passage, in those Books, without Examination; though what they

¹ Vid. *Past. Let.* p. 6, 7. Where the Author reproaches those who pretend to this just and necessary Freedom, without which all Reading is Vain.

² 'Tis a Thing notorious to Divines, and Dr. *Mill* hath made it manifest to the World, That no one Book hath suffer'd so much, by the Length of Time, nor been so perfidiously dealt with (by the pretended Guardians of it) as the *New Testament* in general. Vid. *Wetstenii Pref. Nov. Test.* --- who collects out of Dr. *Mill* above 30,000 various Readings.

many times rigidly insist on, ¹ *Tends neither to the Honour of God, nor the Good of Men*; and tho' it evidently Disagrees with *the Light of Nature, and the Reason of Things*; to be govern'd by which, is by the *Letter-writer* ², deem'd an *Infidel Principle*.

'Tis worth while the observing, how artfully, this declared Enemy to rational Liberty applies himself there, to the Prejudices of *Vulgar Believers*, stirring up their Resentments against those who pretend to judge for themselves in the Construction of Holy Writ, and insinuating as if it should be great Piety in Men always to distrust their own Understandings, but presumptuous Wickedness in them, ever to doubt of their Wit or Fidelity, thro' whose Hands the *Sacred Volumes* have been transmitted, and who pretend now authoritatively to dictate their true Meaning to them; insulting also poor *Sceptics* on that Account, and for daring to suspect, they may sometimes hit upon false *Readings*, and possibly be impos'd on, in Point of *Divine Revelation*, which he will by no Means suffer, tho' those *Readings* should contradict (as is said) *Natural Light*, and the *Reason of Things*; and this at the same Time too, (which is the Jest of it) that he ³ *intreats them carefully to peruse the Sacred Writings*.

Lastly, I come to consider, the *Internal Testimony* this Gospel according to Mathew

¹ Pastoral-Letter, p. 6.

² Ibid. p. 7.

³ Ibid. p. 90.

affords, of its Divine Authority, or rather the Defect which Heretics, the Renouncers of this Gospel complain of in that Respect.

Now the first and great Defect with these is, that there is no Manner of Account, no *Testimony* to be found in it, of the *Author* himself, who he was, in what Time, to whom, or upon what Motives, or Information he began to write, which (says the Adversary) looks very suspicious, especially as he treats of Things sacred, and is for introducing *a New Faith, a New Worship*, and, in a Word, *a New Religion* into the World, *the Impostures* in which were very numerous.

This Author (says the Adversary) is suppos'd the *first* and leading *Evangelist*, the *first* that undertook to publish Facts almost incredible, or at least such, as the Heart of Man could not easily conceive, even *the Incarnation and Miraculous Birth of a God*, together with his *Divine Life, Doctrines, and Actions*, during his Abode here upon Earth; and last of all his cruel Death, and Passion, with the dazzling Wonders that ensu'd, and which accompany'd his triumphant Resurrection from the Dead, sufficient to amaze, and confound Mankind; conscious therefore of the great Difficulty he should have, to obtain the necessary Credit, it was the more incumbent on him, to prepare his Reader's Way to it, by all the just Means he could devise; as particularly by making
him-

himself known first, and after that the *Time and Occasion* of his Writing, as also how he became sufficiently appriz'd of those extraordinary Facts, which he took upon himself, *first* of all, to publish to a bigoted ignorant World, from which he had no Reason to expect a very favourable Hearing.——And if he knew himself to be indeed *Inspir'd* for the Undertaking, what should hinder (says the Adversary) or what could possibly be the Reason, why he did not satisfy us in that Point? and this the rather as the Publication of his *Gospel-History* and Precepts, should tend directly to subvert, not only *That* of his own Country, but all the *Religious Institutions* then in the World, long establish'd, and to which he must know, the several Nations were immoderately addicted.--And further also he could not but foresee, the firm Adherence to all he said, would be indispensibly requir'd, even against inveterate Custom of all those, to whose Hands his *History* should at any Time thereafter come, under Pain of *Eternal Reprobation*.

On the other Hand (say they) for us carelessly to suppose a Literal-Inspiration, without any Marks of it, or so much as the Author's own Testimony, or Pretence to it, is a Credulity of which we ought to be asham'd. —— 'Tis taking up with a *Religion* founded upon *Tradition*, or *Church Testimony*, for which one Part of the Christian World is very deservedly

expos'd; a mere groundless Tradition (say they) against the Reason of the Thing it self, and which therefore is much more easily rejected than receiv'd: — This, (continue they) is to *Believe*, or rather *Create* a Miracle to Our selves, merely upon the Strength of our own Fancies.

But there are some Men (say they) who not only presume absurdly, to extend and limit the Word of God, to just such a Number of Books, but, as observ'd, would also bind Men down, to an Implicit Belief, in every Line, and every Word, in those Books; when 'tis so Apparent, the *Authors* themselves Dictate nothing by Dint of their own *Authority*, nor seem to expect any such blind Submission at our Hands.

For Instance, can any One (say they) believe our present *Author* had any such Expectation, when he never once offers at satisfying his Reader, in any the necessary Points leading to it? Where (says the Adversary) does *Mathew* pretend to be so much as an Eye or Ear-Witness, to any One of Our Saviour's Transactions? Or does he let us know, from whom else he learn'd them, or from what Memoirs he came by them, so as to be enabled to Transmit them to Posterity, with that Accuracy, a Rational Faith in all his Relations, absolutely requir'd? If he has fail'd in affording Us these necessary Antecedents to Belief, we see not why it should be demanded of Us.

The

The *Inspir'd Pen-Men* in the *Old Testament*, *Moses* and the *Prophets*, who were not only bare *Recorders*, but who were themselves also the *Workers of Miracles*, to which *Matthew* no where pretends; These (says the Adversary) were nevertheless careful to let us know, they were commission'd from Heaven, to teach all that they taught us; and sometimes they inform us too of their own Tribes and Families, for more Satisfaction; but they never fail to assure Posterity, that they Prophecy'd by *Divine Authority*, which you hear of, at every Turn; but which they had not Inculcated so often, had they not perceiv'd it necessary, to obtain due Credit and Obedience, to the Divine Commands.—— And *St. Paul* also in his several Epistles, to those Churches he himself erected, follows their Example in some measure, or shall we rather say, —— His own Discretion.

Whereas the *Author* of this *Gospel*, is intirely Silent in that matter, and who indeed if he had attempted to gain a Belief of this Sort, his own Irregularities, (say his Antagonists) would have betray'd him.— Urging that the *Holy Spirit* could never be the Author of those ¹ *Contradictions*, Dislocations

¹ The Adversary had better omitted [*Contradictions*, and *Disagreements*] since These, (most Commentators agree,) are special Signs, and even Proofs of the Truth of the *Gospel* History. —— *Veritatis maximum istud est Judicium* (says *Chrysostome*.) *Nam si per Omnia Consentirent, exactâ diligentiâ*

locations, Improproprieties, and Disagreements, which Divines the most Learned and pious, have Pointed out, in their Comments on this *Gospel*.

'Tis true there are some, who pretend to account for, the Disorder and Confusion observ'd, more especially in the former Part of *St. Mathew's Gospel*, but They are driven to a very odd Expedient ; ¹ *They suppose the Inspir'd Author wrote at first separately, and upon several distinct Papers, which Papers, (or whatever else the Gospel was written upon) being carelessly flung aside by the same Author, were afterwards put together, in their present confus'd Order, by those, who did not perfectly know, the True Series of the History.* — A Conjecture unworthy the *Holy Apostle*, and that *Spirit*, by whose *Afflatus* he is supposed to write. — The *Holy Ghost*, (say these Harmonists) dictated the *Gospel* in good Order, but fail'd in the After-Composure, than which nothing can be more improvidential and absurd.

But 'tis not the Transpositions and Dislocations of Facts only, which the Adversary lays so great Strefs on. — The Meanness and Inaccuracy, (say they) of the

tiâ, — Nemo Hostium Christi fuisset, quin crederet, convenisse unâ Evangelistas, & Humanâ quadam Conspiratione, scripsisse quæ scripserunt, — Chrysostom. Hom. in Math. 1. — Apud Casaubon. adv. Baron. Annal. p. 172. — Vid. etiam Grot. de Veritat. Christian. Rel. lib. 3. S. 13. — Et ubique inter Commentator.

¹ *Vid. Whit. Harm. p. 103, 104.* And other Harmonies to the like Effect.

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whole Composure: And the partial imperfect Account the Author gives, without Order or Coherence, of that Illustrious Person, who is his only Subject, as they shew him to be much *Inferior in Genius* and Capacity, to the unassisted *Grecian and Roman Historians* of those Times, so therefore (they imagine him) far *unequal* to a *Task*, which should prove of that near Consequence and Importance to the World.

For I confess 'tis not easy for some Men, to give into that Notion of ¹ *St. Paul*, that a Being of Infinite Wisdom, *should choose the Foolish and the Weak, the Base and Despis'd*, (that is) those who are farthest off his own Image,) even the Idiotical, Brutish part of Mankind, to teach and reform the Wise; or that he should delight in such rude Instruments, merely to shew his Power against, and *Confound those*, who with commendable Labour and Study, have adorn'd themselves with useful Knowledge: — Had this been True of *St. Paul* himself, he could never have brought over so many People and Nations, to the Profession of Christianity, more 'tis believ'd than all the rest of the (illiterate) *Apostles* together, nor made that illustrious Figure in its behalf, before the learned *Pagans*, as we are told he did, as well in *Judæa*, as at *Rome*, and *Athens*.

¹ 1 Cor. i. 27, 28.

The internal Characters therefore, by which other antient Books are many times establish'd, are we see made use of by the Enemies of this, in order to overthrow it: — Their Arguments for which, are left to the *Letter-writer's* serious Consideration.

But neither do *Sceptics* stop here; they say further, that the *Author* of this *Gospel* is really Mistaken as to Fact, in some of his Relations; for they Object, he hath given us ¹ a *Genealogy* of Jesus, which even the Orthodox allow, to be utterly irreconcilable to other Parts of *Holy Writ*, the Consequence of which is, that he hath administered Occasion for a *Heresy*, which from the first Appearance of this *Gospel*, hath continually infested and turmoil'd the *Church*; for (say ² *Church-Writers*,) 'tis from the *Spurious Genealogy*, given in this *Gospel*, That those two famous *Arch-Heretics*, *Cerintus*, and *Carpocras*, with their numerous Followers, took upon them to prove, that Jesus was sprung in the ordinary way, from *Joseph* and *Mary*, and therewithal to deny his *Divinity* and *Incarnation*, points of the greatest Concernment to *Christianity*: And which if given up to those *Heretics*, would render the Profession of it, in all other Respects, as most think, of no Effect to the World.

¹ He that would see more of this *Genealogy*; let him consult *Sixtus Senenf. Bibl. Sacr.* p. 582. — 590. And *Spanheim, Debia Evangelica.* Vol. 1. 2.

² *Simon. Crit. Hist. N. T.* Part. 1. chap. 7, 8.

In this famous Instance of making *Jesus* to descend from *Joseph the Carpenter*, as *Mathew* apparently contradicts *St. Luke*; so his Enemies have observed, that this is not the only One, wherein they differ on this Head. — Whoever will be at the Pains to compare *Mathew's Genealogy*, with that transmitted to us from *St. Luke*, and *Mathew's* again, with the *Hebrew Pedigrees*, in the *Old Testament*, will find *Gradatim*, as he proceeds, that he scarcely agrees with *St. Luke*, or the *Sacred Canon* of the *Old Testament*, in a single Degree of Descent, except those of the *Patriarchs*, notorious to all; which makes some vehemently suspect, either that this *Gospel* was not wrote, till after the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, when the public Records of the *Jewish Pedigrees* (to which the Author before that Time, might have had free access) perish'd together with the *Temple*; or else that it was compos'd by some *Gentile-Convert*, who being a Stranger to the *Language, Religion, and Policy of the Jews*, i. e. simple and illiterate; received all Things upon *Trust*, from some unfaithful Relator.

And which (says the Enemy) seems to be the Case more plainly, when we consider further, this Author's gross Misapplication of certain *Prophecies* in the *Old Testament*, which by ¹ *erroneous Citations*, and a most

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¹ *St. Jerome*, Commenting on *Micah* v. 2. and Observing the Variance, between the Genuine Text, and its Quotation

wretched and forc'd *Construction*, he hath warp'd to a Sense, altogether foreign to the *Prophets* true Meaning, and this only for the sake of accommodating them to *Jesus* in Proof of his being the *Messiah*, which stood in need of no such support; and which therefore is thought by some, another Instance of this Author's want of *Judgment* at least, if not *Fidelity*: As also, that as he was not himself a *Jew*, so neither could his *Gospel* be calculated, for the Use of the *Jews*, who were never wont to apply any of the *Prophecies* quoted in this *Gospel* to their expected *Messiah*, and consequently he must know, could not be easily impos'd on, in that respect.

Tho' others again have infer'd, from the *Sophisticated manner* of this Author's quoting, and accommodating *Scriptures*, that he was too well vers'd in *Mystical Theology*, and made more use of it, than well comport'd with a poor illiterate *Christian* of the *Apostolick Age*; and consequently that this *Gospel*, might possibly be compos'd, by some *Helenistical Convert Jew*, skilful in that way, but at soonest after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; for the *Primitive Christians* had not learn'd to allegorize and play the

tation in *Math. ii. 6.* Owns freely, that the *Evangelist's* Quotations out of the *Old Testament* are, almost all of them Erroneous. — *Aut Ordo mutetur, aut Verba, & interdum Sensus quoque ipse Diverfus sit.* — They neglecting (as he thinks) to Transcribe them out of the Books themselves, and Trusting to their own Memories, which fail'd them.

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Fool with the *Sacred Writings*, till after the *Platonists* came into the Church; when ('tis true) they became so expert in it, that they would readily convert the plainest Text of Scripture to an *Anagogical Meaning*.—But which Method of expounding *Scripture*, to which the *Antients* were continually addicted, gave the *Enemies* of our Holy Religion a Handle to expose exceedingly, and ridicule it, as a Religion founded on Tropes and Figures only, and the mere Dreams and Visions of Impostors.

I should conclude here, but that I am called upon, by a very ingenious Author, now lying before me, to give a Specimen or two more of *Matthew's* singular Probity and Skill, in composing *Sacred History*; but which however I should not have mentioned, did they not in the Opinion of Friends, as well as Foes, require an *Answer* more solemn and *à propos*, than any has been yet given them.

I have touch'd already upon the *Genealogy* in his first Chapter, and have shewn how infinitely he varies in his Account there compar'd with *St. Luke*, and the rest of *Scripture*, of which *Anti-scripturalists* take Advantage.—I proceed now no farther than his very next Chapter, to demonstrate equal Judgment and Veracity, in his recording Facts of another Nature.

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In the Beginning of this second Chapter, ¹ He sets out with a most surprizing Story, of *three Wise Men coming some where from the East, led by a Star, to a certain House.* — Now what Foundation is there in Nature (says my Author) for such Astrological Notions, as these Wise Men were acted by ; or of such a *Phænomenon* in the Heavens, waiting upon these three Men here and there, and last of all pointing down to a little House, whither they were, without other Instruction, to go? — *Matthew* goes on and says, *That at the News these same Men brought of the Messiah's being born, all Jerusalem was troubled;* which 'tis urg'd cannot be true, for that we all know, the *Jews* expected their *Messiah*, with the utmost Desire and Impatience, agreeably to what *St. Luke* says, ² *That the Tidings of Christ's Birth was Matter of great Joy.* — Again, *Verse 6th*, *Matthew* introduces the *Chief Priests* and *Elders*, as applying the Prophecy of *Micah* v. 2. to the *Messiah*, which we know the old *Jews* constantly understood, some of King *Hezekiah*, and others of *Zorobabel*, whom they also deem'd to have fulfill'd it; and further did in *Christ's* own Time, make

¹ Vid. Scheme of Literal Prophecy, supposed to be wrote by Mr. Collins. — What is observ'd by him of *Matthew's* Inaccuracy and Mistakes in this Chapter, is no more than what was antiently objected on the Part of the *Manichees*, to be found in *St. Augustin*, *Sixtus Senensis*, &c.

² Chap. ii. v. 10.

it a part of his Character.——¹ *Not to know whence he was.*—So far my Author concerning *Matthew's* Judgment and Integrity as an Historian.

The next Instance, he gives, is of his Skill in Chronology, in laying down as he does, the whole Transaction of this Affair in the Reign of King *Herod*.——When according to St. *Luke*, *Jesus* was not born, till many Years after *Herod's* Death, even when *Cyrenius* being Governor of *Syria*, had laid a Tax on *Judæa*; which 'tis certain, he could not have done, had *Herod*, who was supreme Lord of that Country, been alive. Besides that *Matthew* contradicts the *Vulgar Æra* of *Christ's* Nativity, which does not commence, till three Years after the Death of *Herod*.

Nor can this Affair of the Wise Men, the Slaughter of the Infants, the Journey of *Christ* into *Egypt*, and his Return thence (a ² Train of Notorieties recorded by *Matthew*) be well reconciled, to the total Silence of St. *Luke*, in relation to them all; Lastly, that horrible Fact of *Herod's* ordering all the *Infants*, of a whole Town and Neighbourhood to be slain, is subject to great Difficulty; for how could so extraordinary a Fact happen in the World, and no Historian, Sacred or Profane, come to the Knowledge of it, save this Author only?

¹ *John* ix. 29.

² Chap. ii.

But to let alone other Observations of this Nature, That which hath occasioned the most lasting Disputes, among the Antients, and created the greatest Suspicion, in sober-minded and judicious Men, of the Genuineness of this *Second*, as also of the *first Chapter of St. Mathew's Gospel*, is this; That neither of them were to be found, either in the *Nazaren*, or *Ebionite Gospel*, which was undoubtedly the *Antient Hebrew of the Holy Apostle*, nor, which is more surprizing, in any one of the Old MS. Copies of *the Gospel According to Mark*, which by most Divines antient and modern, is conceived to be but an *Epitome of Mathew's*.

Now tho' those two Sects, the *Nazarens* and *Ebionites*, consider'd as *Heretics*, may be suspected to have wickedly retrench'd their *Copies*; yet who will dare to conceive the same of St. *Mark*, whose Abridgment hath been all along held Sacred? Will any one presume to say, he hath sacrilegiously diminish'd two entire Chapters of his Original Author? I should be glad to see a fair Solution of these Difficulties, often press'd by *Heretics*; especially as the *Letter-writer* knows, they have driven many of the pious *Laiety*, and some also of the learned *Clergy*, to the Necessity, either of renouncing the whole *Gospel* as inspir'd, or else of giving up these *two first Chapters* as Interpolations; without which they think it cannot be defended. Tho'

Tho' others of the *Clergy* have been persuaded, the *Apostles* were not so perpetually inspir'd, as to be without all Error and Mistake. — Therefore *Episcopus* (one of the ablest Divines of the last Age) reflecting on some *indefensible Errors* in the *New Testament*, and admitting them nevertheless to be genuine, observes against those, who out of a ridiculous Piety, labour'd in vain to account for them¹: — *That 'twas much better, and would cause less Scandal, to acknowledge fairly, some Failings in the Canonical Books, rather than fly to absurd Interpretations, by which the Suspicion of a Failing, is not only not remov'd, but increas'd; and when the Fault is not acknowledged, it looks (says he) as if we were not in good Earnest for Truth.* — Neither do I think it necessary (says² *Erasmus*) we should attribute every Thing in the *Apostles* to Miracle. They were Men, some Things they were ignorant of, and in others mistaken. —³ *Unus Christus caruit omni Errore, & qui scis an hanc Laudem, omnibus modis absolutam, sibi servari voluit?* — To the like Effect *Grotius*, *Jerome*, and also *Origen*, and several of the *Greek Fathers*.

But I have been led insensibly to a much greater Length, in producing the Arguments of *Heretics*, for the *Letter-writer's*

¹ Institut. Theol. lib. 4. p. 232.

² Comment. *Acts* x.

³ Idem in Epist. ad Eckium.

Observation, against *another Edition* of his last *Pastoral Letter*, than I at first propos'd. I had Thoughts indeed, when I first begun, to have gone thro' the whole first *Gospel*, and have cited *Verbatim*, not only the Interpolations, but all pretended Inconsistencies taken notice of, either by *Heretics*, or our own *Commentators*, and by them collated with the Rest of *Scripture*. But as such *Citations* I found were like to swell to a great Bulk; so I apprehend more than enough has been said, to *Answer the main Design of this Treatise*; which is to Evince the Necessity of another Sort of Defence, for the *Truth and Authority of Gospel History* against *Infidels*, than is made in the last *Pastoral Letter*.—The Writer whereof may know, That Men are not to be led now, as in times of Ignorance, by the loose Traditions of the *Fathers*; who as they were void for the most part, of all *critical Knowledge*, so were they also *Heretics and Enemies to the Catholic Church*; — There is not a single Father, quoted by the *Letter-writer*, but whom he knows to have been *Heterodox in Opinion, and an Infidel*, with regard to the Essentials of our present Christianity. Now what can their *Testimony* avail, either to confirm the *Orthodox Believer*, or to convince other Species of *Heretics* of the *Authority* of the *Gospel* here treated of? While these pretend to shew, even from those *Fathers* themselves, so many Impro-

prieties

prieties and Mistakes confess'd in it; besides frequent Clashings with the other *Inspir'd Writings*; and tho' perhaps it will be allow'd to agree with them sometimes in the Main, yet (say they) the Disagreement that is, demonstrates Error in the Case, and that all its Words always, are not to be taken for Oracles.

But I say enough has been urg'd on the part of *Heretics* in relation to our Author's Abilities, for composing *Sacred History*. 'Twould be an endless Work to go thro' all the Remarks and Exceptions they make, to the several parts of this *Gospel*.--The Learned¹ *Frederic Spanheim* (the Father a very *Orthodox* Divine) hath rais'd near *one Hundred Objections*, or Doubts (he calls them) touching the *Authority* of this *Gospel*, in the Solution of which, he exhausts above 900 Pages in two 4to Volumes, with very little satisfaction (as appears) either to himself or others:— Could the dubious Gentleman have rais'd in himself, but one Doubt more, and pursu'd it close, 'tis likely it had happily absorb'd, and put an end to all the rest; but that, alas! never entered into his Head. *Of such infinite Force is Education, and so effectually doth it darken the Minds of Men.*

Thus I have finish'd my *Inquiry* into the *Authority of the Gospel According to Mathew*, with the strictest regard to Truth; and

¹ In his Tract intitled, *Dubia Evangelica*, consisting of 3 Vols. in *Quarto*, Printed at *Geneva* 1639.

tho' I have laid some Strefs and Emphasis, on the Arguments of *Heretics*, and may seem in the pursuit of Argument to lean on their Side ; yet this I declare is for the sake of Dispute only, in order if possible to extract the Truth, which every Man, more especially in *this glorious Kingdom of Light and Liberty*, hath both the Right and the Means to know ; but which however can be no other ways come at, than by rigid Inquiries of this kind. — Thus *Cotta*, tho' a Priest, undertook to argue with *Balbus*, against the very *Being and Providence of the Gods* ; but feignedly, and purely to satisfy his own Mind in some points. *Non ex Animo, sed simulatè.* — ¹ *Non tam refellere (Balbi Orationem,) quam ea quæ minus intellexit, requirere.*

'Tis true — The Arguments here urg'd, are most of them antient, and the pretended Contradictions, Mistakes, or Inadvertencies (call 'em what you will) such only, as have been long since animadverted upon : — Nevertheless, with Grief I say it, they have never yet met with, a tolerable Answer, or Solution ; on the contrary, we see some of the most celebrated Divines, have not only confess'd those Contradictions, &c. — but have ventur'd to father 'em, even upon the Wisdom of the *Holy Ghost* himself, as permitting them originally to fall, from the *Evangelist's* Pen, in order to clear the Gospel-

¹ Cic. de Nat. Deor. 3: 1.

Writers of all Confederacy and make their *Gospels* go down the better; — to avoid which Blasphemy, and to clear the inspired Writings of a Charge so heavy, is the great Reason, of my laying hold of the present Occasion, to set forth — Some few only of the Faults in our first *Gospel*, *Heretics* most insist on; to the end the *Pastoral Letter-writer*, now his Hand's in, may, if he thinks fit, imploy his great Abilities, in their utter Extinction; and have the sole Merit, of establishing the *First Book* of the *New Testament*, on a much better Foot, than it hath ever yet stood, since its original Publication.

He may perhaps be sensible of his own Inadvertence in publishing a little too hastily, his last Epistolary Performance; in which had he been sufficiently Provident, he should have guarded beforehand, against the very Suspicion of being *Apocryphal*, to which he knew any one Book of the *New-Testament*, was more than ordinarily liable, and endeavour'd at least, to remove some of those unanswer'd Objections, on which that Suspicion yet subsists.

At his first setting out, he promised to *enter into the Matter fully and distinctly, in order to give us a clear View of the Evidences both of the Truth and Authority of the Writings of the New Testament*: — But it was the general Observation (long before this *Inquiry* was thought of) that he had
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fail'd egregiously in the Undertaking ; and that he was so far, from having entered into the Matter fully, that he had produc'd neither Evidence nor Argument to the *Points in Question*, nor attended even to his own *Positions*. — In a Word, that he had treated the Subject so loosely, as to be thought by some, not to be in earnest ; which puts me in Mind of what the Reverend Mr. Baxter aptly says on the like Occasion.

Few Christians (says that pious ' Man) *have any other than the Popish implicit Faith in this Point, nor any better Arguments than the Papists, to prove the Scriptures the Word of God ; they have receiv'd it by Tradition, and think it impious to doubt of it, and therefore believe it. — Tho' we could persuade People never so confidently, that Scripture is the Word of God, and yet give no Reason, why they should believe this, rather than any other Book to be that Word, as it would prove in them no right way of Believing, so is it in us, no Right way of Teaching. — It's strange* (continues he) *to consider how we all abhor that Piece of Popery, which resolves our Faith, into that of the Church ; and yet that we do, for the Generality of us Professors, content our selves with the same Kind of Faith : — Yea, and many Ministers, never yet gave their People better Grounds, than to tell them, it is damnable to deny it ; but help them not to the necessary Antecedents of Faith.* This

This general Conduct of the *Clergy*, which Mr. *Baxter* deservedly complains of, is certainly the *Ground-work* of all *Infidelity*; no *Faith* being lasting, but that which is solidly founded, upon the *Reason and Evidence of Things*; — and consequently, that the slovenly imprudent Treatment the *Scriptures* have from Time to Time met with, from those, who profess to preach, and write in Defence of them, hath not only greatly contributed to that *Infidelity*, but hath wounded their *Authority* more, than all the Efforts of *Heretics* and *Infidels*.

If their People say only they Believe, few of our *Priests* care upon what Grounds; they demand not a *Rational Faith*, but avoid and condemn it in all their Practice, and those that contend for it; what they for the most part rest upon, for the Conviction of *Sceptics*, is *Church Testimony*, or the Tradition and Authority of the *Fathers*: If these are despis'd, their last Shift is, to threaten Damnation, and to salute those who but continue to doubt, with the charitable Names of *Libertines* and *Atheists*.

But as foul Language seldom hath other Effect, than to Irritate and Provoke, so the *Letter-writer*, who cannot be wholly excused from it, is here call'd upon, to reply to this Treatise, mean as it is, for the tender Instruction, if he pleases, of Unbelievers;
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(that is) to supply the Defects, of his last most imperfect and superficial Epistle, wrote in Defence of the whole Canon of the *New Testament*, especially with regard to the single Book here examined, upon the old Objections, of *Heretics* and *Infidels*, which he may know fly abroad and prevail now, more than ever; in which only he will prove himself worthy of that *Superintendancy* he claims over a numerous People, and also to be inspir'd, with that Care and Charity, which a Successor of the *Apostles* should extend to all Men.

F I N I S.
