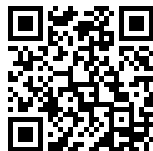


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R E M A R K S

U P O N

D R. P R I E S T L E Y ' s

S E C O N D L E T T E R S

T O T H E

A R C H D E A C O N O F S T. A L B A N ' s .



R E M A R K S

U P O N

D R. P R I E S T L E Y ' s

S E C O N D L E T T E R S

T O T H E

A R C H D E A C O N O F S T. A L B A N ' s ,

W I T H

P R O O F S o f c e r t a i n F A C T S a s s e r t e d b y  
t h e A R C H D E A C O N .



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L O N D O N :

P R I N T E D F O R J. R O B S O N , N E W B O N D S T R E E T .

M D C C L X X X V I .

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- Page 1. lin. 5. for *would*, read *might*.  
— 11. lin. penult. for *Platinus*, read *Plotinus*.  
— 20. lin. 5 and 6. for *Dr. Priestley imagines*, read  
*Dr. Priestley perhaps imagines*.  
Ibid. lin. 18. for *writings and*, read *principles and the*.  
— 62. lin. 6. for *Lord: in*, read *Lord. In*.  
Ibid. lin. 16. for *bas*, read *is*.  
— 70. lin. 18. for *them*, read *them;*





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# PART FIRST.

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## R E M A R K S.

**W**HEN first I had the pleasure to peruse the Second Letters addressed to me by Doctor Priestley, upon the subject of our Lord's divinity; I was not ill satisfied to find the performance such, both in matter and in style, as would have released me from all obligation to a formal reply; although I had made no previous declaration of the resolution, in which I am fixed, never to enter into a useless disquisition upon the main question—an exhausted subject, in which nothing new is to be said on either side;—nor to pursue an interminable controversy, with one, whom, with a high respect for his natural abilities, and his attainments in some other parts of learning, I must still call an insufficient antagonist. The dislike of trouble in my natural disposition is so  
B strong,

strong, as too often, I fear, to strive for the mastery with better principles. I was well satisfied to find, that in the contest with Dr. Priestley, I was at liberty to indulge my indolence, without seeming to desert my cause: that his book, abounding in new specimens of that confident ignorance, which in these subjects is the most prominent feature in his writings, and in expressions of fiery resentment and virulent invective, carried with it, as I thought, its own confutation to unprejudiced readers of all descriptions: to the learned reader, by the proof which it furnishes of the author's incompetency in the subject; to the unlearned, by the consciousness which the fierceness of his wrath betrays of a defect of argument.

To mention a few instances; it gave me great satisfaction to perceive, that the whole confutation of the proof, which I had built upon the epistle of St. Barnabas, of the orthodoxy of the first Hebrew Christians \*, was to consist in an insinuation, that "doubts had been entertained by many learned men concerning the genuineness of that epistle †;" and in an assertion of my antagonist's, "that it is most evidently interpolated; and that the interpolations respect the very subject of which we treat ‡."

The

\* See Letter viii. in reply to Dr. Priestley. † Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Albans, p. 7. ‡ Ibid.

The genuineness of the epistle, as a work of St. Barnabas the apostle, had been expressly given up by me; its age being the only circumstance of importance to my argument. For the notion that it is evidently interpolated, particularly in what respects the subject of which we treat; the evidence by which the assertion is supported, is of that sort, which every one, who engages in controversy, must rejoice that his adversary should condescend to employ. Some passages in the Greek text, which allude to our Lord's divinity, are not found, it seems, in the old Latin version; others, relating to the same subject, appear in the old Latin version only, and are not found in the Greek text\*. That the Greek text and Latin version both carry evident marks of the injuries of time; that defects, sometimes of a single word, sometimes of many words, sometimes of whole periods, abound in both, is known to every one who has ever looked into the work. It is doubtless therefore a very rational conclusion, that whatever is not found both in the original, and in the version, is in either an interpolation. That the hand of Time must always have fallen upon the corresponding passages in the two copies, may be taken as a self-evident proposition! If any asser-

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tion

\* Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Albans, p. 7.

tion therefore of our Lord's divinity occur in either copy, which is not found in both, the suspicion must be but too well founded, that some wicked Athanasian has been tampering !

I was well pleased to find, that the two passages which my antagonist has produced from the Greek text, as evident instances of interpolation, are not among those which I have cited. In these two passages the divinity of our Lord is briefly alluded to. In every one of the four, cited by me, it is distinctly asserted or strongly implied : of these four two are found, with inconsiderable varieties, both in the Greek and in the Latin; the other two in the Latin only. But that I lay the chief stress \* upon either of the two which are in the Latin version only, is a mere imagination of my adversary.

The satisfaction, which this confutation of my argument from Barnabas afforded, was not a little heightened, by the manner in which I am convicted of an error, in the appeal, which, in my Sixth Letter to Dr. Priestley, I made to the authority of Grotius, among others, in support of the opinion, which I maintain, of the orthodoxy of the Nazarenes, in the article of our Lord's divinity.

\* Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Albans, p. 8.

vinity. Dr. Priestley, in his first Letters to me, said, that I was singular in asserting this. To show that I was not singular in the assertion (not to prove the thing asserted ; for the proof of that I build entirely upon what is to be found in ancient writers ; but to disprove the pretended novelty of the assertion) I alleged the authorities of Grotius, Vossius, Spencer and Huetius. “ Having examined, says my antagonist, in the Third of his second Letters, the most respectable of these authorities, viz. Grotius, I find him entirely failing you, and saying no such thing as you ascribe to him \*.” Then, to prove that Grotius fails me, and says no such thing as I ascribe to him ; Dr. Priestley produces a passage from Grotius, to which I never meant to allude, and which is indeed nothing to the purpose. But he takes no notice of the passages upon which my assertion was built, and to which the margin of my publication referred him.

The satisfaction, which it gave me to find myself thus confuted, was still increased, by the retraction of this confutation in my adversary’s appendix, No. 3. A retraction, which in effect is little less than a confession of the fraudulent trick, which had not  
the

\* Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Albans, p. 30.

the advice of friends seasonably interposed, it is too evident, he meant to put upon the Public. I say upon the Public ; for upon me he could not think that it would pass. Whatever may be his opinion of my learning ; he has, I believe, had some experience of my vigilance, in watching the movements of an enemy ; and he could not imagine, that the passage, which he produces, would pass with myself, for that which I cited. But he has heard perhaps from those who know me, of the constitutional indolence which domineers in my disposition ; and under this circumstance, and the declaration which I had made of my intention to give him no reply, he thought himself secure against detection.

I must acknowledge another gratification, which I received from this same No. III. of Dr. Priestley's Appendix. I learnt from it, that Grotius, " when he speaks of the Nazarenes as holding the common faith of other Christians, with respect to Christ ;" meant only that they held something, which was *not* the common faith of other Christians †. And that Sulpitius Severus, when he  
says

† " By the common faith of Christians in that early age, Grotius no doubt meant his *own opinion*, &c." Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Albans, p. 217.

says that " all the Jewish Christians till the time  
 " of Adrian held that Christ was God, though they  
 " observed the law of Moses, (*Christum Deum*  
 " *sub legis observatione credebant*) is to be considered  
 " as having said nothing more, than that al-  
 " most all the Jews at Jerusalem were Christians,  
 " though they observed the law of Moses \*." Certainly the learned commentator and the historian are to be so understood. For were they to be understood in the plain meaning of their words, they would flatly contradict Dr. Priestley. Which however if they had done, it would have been no great matter : for any writer, who may contradict Dr. Priestley, is little to be regarded.

Dr. Priestley has been reading the Parmenides †! Having taught the Greek language several years at Warrington, he conceived himself well qualified to encounter that profound book. The benefit which he has received from the performance of this knotty task, exactly corresponds with my notion of his abilities for the undertaking. He has found the whole treatise unintelligible ‡! Perhaps he has ere this *looked through* the Enneads of Platinus with the like emolument. He must therefore be well qualified  
 to

\* P. 218. † Second Letters, p. 145. ‡ Second Letters, p. 145.



to illustrate the history of the Platonic doctrines, in the most mysterious parts: and in the **GREAT WORK**, with which the press now labours, his promise will, I dare say, be fulfilled of teaching the world many things respecting them, of which his antagonist is ignorant. He can produce hundreds of passages to prove, that the “divinity which the orthodox Christians ascribed to Christ was the very same principle which constituted the wisdom and other powers of God the Father;” and he can prove that “this was agreeable to the principles of those Platonists, from whom Philo and the Christian fathers derived their opinion \*.” That the second person in the Platonic triad was, according to the theology of that school, the *Principle of Intelligence* in the godhead, he will find indeed not difficult to prove. But unless he can shew, that this principle of Divine Intelligence, was not supposed, by the Platonists, to have had from all eternity a personality of its own, distinct from the personality of either of the two other principles; he will prove nothing, but what is already known to every child in Platonism.

The **GREAT WORK** will probably abound in new specimens of the proficiency which he has made in logic, under the tuition of the great **Locke**.

It

\* Second Letters, p. 124.

It was not unpleasant to me to find this great logician confounding *being*, *substance*, and *substratum*†; that is, ignorant of the distinctions of ὑποστασις (which seems to be Being in his language) εἶδος and ὑποκειμενον: to find him unapprized of that great principle, without which a logician will handle his tools but awkwardly, that the genus cannot be predicated of the specific differences‡; and, from an ignorance of this principle, falling into an error, into which indeed greater men than he have fallen, that Being is the universal *genus* under which all other *genera* rank as *species*.

These, and many other, glaring instances of unfinished erudition, shallow criticism, weak argument, and unjustifiable art to cover the weakness, and supply the want of argument; which must strike every one who takes the trouble to look thro' these Second Letters; put me quite at ease with respect to the judgment, which the Public would be apt to form between my antagonist and me; and confirmed me in the resolution of making no reply to him, and of troubling the Public no more upon the subject, except so far as might be necessary, to establish some facts, which he has somewhat too

C peremptorily

† Second Letters, &c. p. 138. ‡ " — The former [being] is the genus, and the latter [person] the species, &c. p. 140.

peremptorily denied ; and to vindicate my character from aspersions, which he has too inconsiderately thrown out.

The matters of fact which I mean to prove are these.

I. Origen's want of veracity in disputation.

II. The existence of orthodox Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian.

III. The decline of Calvinism, amounting almost to a total extinction of it, among the English dissenters.

The slander, which I mean to repel, is contained in my adversary's insinuation, that I have spoken with contempt of the doctrines of Calvin.

As for the outcry which he makes about my intolerance, and my bigotry to what he calls high-church principles, it gives me rather pleasure than uneasiness. I consider it, as the vain indignant struggle of a strong animal which feels itself overcome; the mere growling of the tyger in the toils; and I disdain to answer. I glory in my principles; I am proud of the abuse, which they may draw upon me.

me. Nor shall I pretend to apologize for the severity and warmth of my present language, or of any which I may think proper to employ in the ensuing pages. After the avowal which Dr. Priestley has made, in his last publication \*, of the spirit in which he has drawn his polemical sword; it is time, that on our part also the *scabbard should be thrown away.*

Dr. Priestley's Second Letters to the Archdeacon of St. Albans are, at this instant, lying open before me, at the 53d page. My eye is attracted to a passage near the bottom, distinguished by a mark, which in the first perusal of the work, I had set against it in the margin; which reminds me, that it is one of those, in which I was the most captivated with the justness of the reasoning, and the frankness of the writer's declarations. Although I have already spent more time than when I first took up my pen, I thought to do, in culling the flowers of my adversary's composition; I cannot resist the temptation of stopping (although it delay for a few moments the business to which I hasten) to pluck this delicious blossom, which I had well

C 2 nigh

\* See the Animadversions on Mr. White's Sermons annexed to Dr. Priestley's discourse upon the Importance of Free Inquiry, p. 78.

nigh overlooked, sensible how much it will add to the brilliancy and fragrance of my poetry.

Bishop Pearson alleges, that Ignatius in his epistles to Polycarp, to the Ephesians, Magnesians, and Philadelphians, refers to the doctrine of the Ebionites as an heretical doctrine. These references would demolish Doctor Priestley's notion, that the Ebionites were not considered as heretics, so early as in the times of Ignatius. Dr. Priestley "therefore finds no such references," in these epistles, "except perhaps two passages." Two clear references are just as good as two thousand. How then shall we dispose of these two passages? Very easily. "They may easily be *supposed* to have "been altered." Yes. Suppositions are easily made; and, for that very reason, they are not easily admitted by wary men; without some other recommendation than the bare ease of making them, joined to the consideration of the service, which a particular supposition may render to a party-writer, as a crutch for a lame argument. Upon what ground then may we build this supposition, which is so easily made, of an alteration in two passages in the epistles of Ignatius, which as they now stand, contradict Dr. Priestley? Upon the firmest ground imaginable. "When CORRECTED by "an UNITARIAN, nothing is wanting to the "evident purpose of the writer." *Corrected by an Unitarian!*

*Unitarian!* The Unitarians, if they are not shamefully belied by the ecclesiastical historians, have ever indeed been famous for their readiness at this business of *Correction*. The Arians took the trouble to correct a treatise of Hilary of Poictou, in which the heretical confession of the council of Ariminum was the subject: they corrected, and corrected, till the work became a novelty to its author. They, or the Macedonians, did the same good office for St. Cyprian's epistles; and to circulate their amended copies the more widely, they sold them at Constantinople at a low price. Similar liberties were taken with the works of the two Alexandrians, Clemens and Dionysius. They, who thus corrected, were not deficient in the kindred art of forging whole treatises, under the names of the brightest luminaries of the church, in which the holy fathers were made to support heretical doctrines. The Holy Scriptures were not unattempted; as appears by the testimony of those \*, who lived at the time when the *amended* copies were extant in the world; who, in proof of the heavy accusation, appeal to the notorious disagreement of different copies, which had undergone the revision of different heresiarchs. This is indeed the confutation of the Unitarian doctrine, that both the primitive fathers, and the holy scriptures, must be corrected in every page, before they can

\* See Euseb. Ecc. Hist. Lib. V.

can be brought to give evidence in its favour. It is because the Unitarians themselves have always understood this, that they have ever been ready to apply the needful *corrections*, when they thought the thing might be done without danger of detection. But the modern *Coryphæus* of the company is, I believe, the first who ever had the indiscretion to avow the practice, and confess that he could not otherwise stand his ground, than by an appeal to the testimony of CORRECTED FATHERS ! He is himself indeed a master of the art of correction. His attempt upon a passage in St. John's first Epistle, will never be forgotten \*.

Will he dare to recriminate ? he will. " The orthodox, he says, as they are commonly called, have tampered with the New Testament itself, having made interpolations favourable to the doctrine of the Trinity, especially the famous passage concerning *the three that bear record in heaven †.*" The great name of NEWTON is brought up, to give weight to the accusation. " Newton among others has clearly proved, &c." And this he imagines, I myself will acknowledge. Doctor Priestley, even before the inditing of these second letters, must have found himself deceived in

\* See the charge to the clergy of the archdeaconry of St. Albans, p. 17. † Second Letters, p. 13.

in so many instances, in his imaginations about me; how I would acknowledge, and how I would recant, how my eyes would be opened by the information which he had to give me; that I wonder he should venture to imagine any more, in a subject in which he has found himself so liable to error. He imagines, that I must acknowledge, that Newton has clearly proved, that the record of the three in heaven in St. John's first epistle, is an interpolation made by some of those, whom I call the orthodox.—No; I acknowledge no such thing. Suppose I were to make the first part of the acknowledgement, that the passage is an interpolation; what consequence would bind me to the second; that the orthodox had been the falsifiers? Is it because their purpose might have been served by the pretended falsification? Truly their purpose had been poorly served by it. It is not agreed, among the orthodox themselves, that this text relates to the consubstantiality of the three persons in the Godhead. It is my own opinion, that it does not: and this I take to be the reason, that it is so seldom alleged by the ancient writers in proof of the Trinity. But why must I acknowledge, that the passage is at all an interpolation?—Because Newton and others have clearly proved it. To me the proof is not clear. Were the defect of positive proof of the authenticity of the passage much greater, than

Newton



Newton and others have been able to make out; it would still be a strong argument with me in favour of it, that the omission of the passage breaks the connection, and wonderfully heightens the obscurity, of the Apostle's discourse. Doctor Priestley imagines, that I hold myself bound to acknowledge whatever Newton has attempted to prove. In his letters to me, and in his animadversions upon Mr. White's celebrated discourses, he is often pleased to boast of the probability \* of what he knows, more than his antagonists : and that too in subjects, in which he has been convicted of the greatest want of knowledge. I hope I may say, without arrogance, that it is probable, that Sir Isaac Newton's talents in demonstration, are as well known to me, as to Doctor Priestley. It is probable too, that after the pains which I have taken to examine the writings and authorities on which his ancient chronology was founded, I am as well qualified, as Dr. Priestley, to judge of his talents in other subjects, which are not capable of demonstration. Now in these, I scruple not to say with a writer of our own times, that the great Newton went out like a common man. For the exposition, which to complete his argument against the record of the three in heaven, he gives of the context of the

Apostles

\* Second Letters, p. 135, 146. 200, 202. Animadversions on Mr. White, p. 66, 72.

Apostle's discourse; I hold it to be a model of that sort of paraphrase, by which any given sense may be affixed to any given words. But that even the external evidence of the authenticity of the passage is far less defective, than Newton and others have imagined; will be denied, I believe, by few who have impartially considered the very able vindication of this celebrated text, which has lately been given by Mr. Travis in his Letters to Mr. Gibbon. Dr. Priestley perhaps has not found leisure to *look through* that performance. Or, if he has, he has formed, I suppose, "no very high opinion of the author's acquaintance with Christian Antiquity\*." For in this all, who oppose the Socinian tenets, are miserably deficient.

Here I close my remarks upon my adversary's reasoning; and I now proceed to the proof of my own facts, and the vindication of my own character.

\* See Remarks on Mr. Howes's discourse.

## PART SECOND.

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### P R O O F S.

#### CHAPTER FIRST.

*Of Origen's want of Veracity.—Of the Fathers in general.—Of the passages in which St. Chrysoſtom is ſuppoſed to aſſert, that the Apoſtles temporized.—A ſpecimen of Correction by an Unitarian.*

**T**HE firſt fact that comes in queſtion is the want of veracity in diſputation, which I impute to Origen.

In the ſecond book againſt Celfus, near the beginning of the book, Origen aſſerts of the Hebrew Chriſtians of his own times, without exception, that they had not abandoned the laws and cuſtoms

of their ancestors; and that, for that reason, they were called Ebionites. Dr. Priestley sets a high value upon this testimony of Origen; as clearly establishing his great point, that the Ebionites were nothing worse than the Christians of the Circumcision. I maintain, that if the truth of Origen's assertion were admitted; still his testimony would be less to Dr. Priestley's purpose, than he imagines. It would prove, indeed, the Hebrew Christian, and the Ebionite, to be the same; but it would equally prove, that the disbelief of our Lord's divinity was no necessary part of the Ebionæan doctrine. But I go further. I deny the truth of Origen's assertion in both its branches. I deny, that it is universally true of the Hebrew Christians, in his time, that they had not abandoned the Mosaic Law; and I deny that it is true, that they were all called Ebionites. I say, that Origen himself knew better, than to believe his own assertion. And I say that it was a part of Origen's character, not to be incapable of asserting, in argument, what he believed not.

Dr. Priestley ill brooks this open attack upon the credibility of one, whom he considers as a principal witness. He defends Origen, by retorting a similar accusation upon me; and, with the utmost vehemence of indignant oratory, he arraigns me at the tribunal of the Public, as a falsifier of history, and a defamer

of the character of the dead \*. From assertions which I have not rashly made, it must be something more terrible to my feelings, than the reproaches of Dr. Priestley, loudly re-echoed by his whole party, that shall compel me to recede.

I say, then, that in the particular matter in question Origen asserted a known falsehood. I say, in general, that a strict regard to truth, in disputation, was not the virtue of his character.

With respect to the particular matter in question; if I prove, that Origen knew the falsehood of his own assertion in the first branch of it, in which he avers, "that the Hebrew Christians in his time had not abandoned their ancient laws and customs;" no great stress, I presume, will be laid upon the second, "that they were all called Ebionites." For, according to Origen's account of the reason of the name (which yet I believe not to be the true one), the two branches of his assertion must stand or fall together.

It is an inconvenience which attends controversy, that it obliges both the writer and the reader to go frequently over the same ground. I must here repeat, what I observed in the seventh of my letters

to

\* Second Letters, &c. Preface p. xviii. p. 47, and 192.

to Dr. Priestley, that it was in answer to a reproach upon the converted Jews, which Celsus had put in the mouth of an unbelieving Jew, that by embracing Christianity they were deserters of their ancient law, that Origen asserts, that the Jews believing in Christ had not renounced their judaism. This assertion is made at the beginning of Origen's second book. Now, at no greater distance than in the third section of the same book, the good father takes quite another ground to confute his adversary. He insults over his ignorance, for not making the distinctions, which he himself, in the allegation in question, had confounded. "It is my present point, says Origen, to evince Celsus's ignorance; who has made a Jew say to his countrymen, to Israelites believing in Christ; *Upon what motive have you deserted the law of your ancestors?* But how have they deserted the law of their ancestors, who reprove those that are attentive to it, and say, *Tell me ye, &c.\*?*" Then, after a citation of certain texts from St. Paul's epistles, in which the Apostle avails himself of the authority of the law, to enforce particular duties; which texts make nothing either for or against the Jew's

\* *Νυν δε προκειται ιλεγξαι την τε Κελσου αιμαθιαν, παρ' η' ο Ιουδαιος λεγει τοις πολιταις, και τοις Ισραηλαιοις ωρισυσασι επι τον Ιησυν, το· Τι παθοιτε κατελιπειτε τον παλαιον νομον; και τα εξης. Πως δε καταλοιπωσι τον παλαιον νομον οι επισημωνες τοις μη ακουσιν αυτων, και λεγοντων· λεγεις μοι οι τον νομον, &c.*

Jew's assertion, that the Christians of the circumcision had abandoned their ancient laws; but prove only, that the disuse of the law, if it was actually gone into disuse, could not be deemed a desertion; because it proceeded not from any disregard to the authority of the Lawgiver: after a citation of texts to this purpose, Origen proceeds in this remarkable strain. "And how confusedly does Celsus's Jew speak upon this subject? when he might have said more plausibly, **SOME** of you *have relinquished the old customs* upon pretence of expositions and allegories. **SOME** again, expounding, as you call it, spiritually, nevertheless observe the institutions of our ancestors. But **SOME**, not admitting these expositions, are willing to receive Jesus as the person foretold by the prophets, and to observe the law of Moses according to the ancient customs, as having in the letter the whole meaning of the Spirit\*." In these words Origen confesses all that I have alleged of him. He confesses, in contradiction to his former assertion, that he knew of three sorts of

\* ——— Και ὡς συγκεκριμενως γε ταυθ' ὁ παρὰ τῶν Κέλσῳ Ἰουδαῖος λέγει, δυναμειος καθ'αυτῶρον εἶπει, ὅτι ΤΙΝΕΣ μετ' ἡμῶν καταλειποσιν τὰ ἴθη, προφασει διηγησιν καὶ ἀλληγοριῶν· ΤΙΝΕΣ δὲ καὶ διηγημιοι, ὡς ἰκαρτίλλισθε, πνευματικῶς, ἔδειν ἤτιον τὰ σαφῆρα τηρεῖτε· ΤΙΝΕΣ δὲ, ἔδει διηγημιοι, βυλισθε καὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν παραδειξασθαι ὡς προφητευσθῆνα, καὶ τὸν Μωυσειῶς ἰομοι τηρεσαι κατὰ τὰ σαφῆρα, ὡς ἐν τῇ λέξει ἰχοσῆις τοῦ σαφῆρα τῶ πνευματικῶν.

of Jews professing Christianity. One sort adhered to the letter of the Mosaic law, rejecting all figurative interpretations : another sort admitted a figurative interpretation, conforming, however, to the letter of the precept : but a third sort (the first in Origen's enumeration) had relinquished the observance of the literal precept, conceiving it to be of no importance in comparison of the latent figurative meaning.

But this is not all. In the next sentence, he gives us to understand, though I confess more indirectly, but he gives us to understand ; that of these three sorts of Hebrews professing Christianity, they only, who had laid aside the use of the Mosaic law, were in his time considered as true Christians. For he mentions it as a further proof of the ignorance of Celsus, pretending, as it appears he did, to deep erudition upon all subjects, that in his account of the heresies of the Christian Church he had omitted *the Israelites believing in Jesus, and not laying aside the law of their ancestors.* " But how should Celsus, he says, make clear distinctions upon this point ; who, in the sequel of his work, mentions impious heresies altogether alienated from Christ, and others, which have renounced the Creator, and has not noticed [or knew not of ] Israelites believing in Jesus and  
 " not



“ not relinquishing the law of their fathers \* ?”  
 What opinion is to be entertained of a writer’s veracity, who, in one page, asserts that the Hebrews professing Christianity had not renounced the Jewish law; and, in the next, affirms that a part of them had renounced it, not without an insinuation, that they, who had not, were heretics, not true Christians? EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAMSI JURATO, QUI TAM MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO.

I flatter myself, that I have established my charge against Origen with respect to the particular fact in question. That a strict regard to truth in disputation was not the virtue of his character, I shall now shew by another strange instance of prevarication, which occurs in these same books against Celsus. Celsus, to deprive the Christian cause of all benefit from Isaiah’s prophecy of the Virgin’s conception, makes his Jew say, what hath since been said by many Jewish critics without the least foundation, that the Hebrew word in Is. vii. 14, which is rendered by the LXX, a *Virgin*, denotes only a  
 young

\* Αλλα γαρ ποθεν Κελσος τα καλα τον τογον τρανωσαι, ος και αριστων μεν αθεν, και τε Ιησν πανη αλλοτριων εν τοις ιξης εμνημονουσι, και αλλων καταλειψων τον δεμωργον\* εν οιδι δε και Ισραηλιδας εις Ιησν περιουσιας και ε καταλιποιας τον πατριον νομον.

*young woman.* Origen, in justification of the sense in which Christian interpreters understand the passage, cites\* the law against the incontinence of betrothed virgins in Deut. xxii. 23, 24; the word **לַמָּוּת**, which Christians understand of a virgin in Isaiah, being allowed, as Origen will have it, to denote a virgin in this passage of the law. But in this passage, according to our modern Hebrew text, the word is not **לַמָּוּת**, but **בְּתוּלָה**. Were it certain that **לַמָּוּת** had been the reading in the copies of the age of Origen; a suspicion might arise, that the text had been corrupted by the Jews, for the purpose of depriving the Christians of one argument in vindication of their interpretation of Isaiah. But there is something so suspicious in the manner of Origen's appeal to this text; that he is rather to be suspected of prevarication, than the synagogue of fraud. — *ἡ μὲν λέξις ἡ Ἀλμια, ἣν οἱ μὲν ἑξομνηκονία μετέληφασιν ἄλλοι δὲ εἰς τὴν νεανίαν, κείλαι; ΩΣ ΦΑΣΙ, καὶ ἐν τῷ Δευτερονομιῶ ἐπιπαρθενῆς, &c.* “The word **לַמָּוּת** which the LXX “ have translated into the word *παρθενος* [a virgin], “ but other interpreters, into the word *νεανίς* [a “ young woman], is put too, AS THEY SAY, “ in Deuteronomy for a virgin.” *What is this, As they say?* Was it unknown to the compiler of the Hexapla, what the reading of the Hebrew  
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text,

\* *Contra Cels. Lib. I. § 34.*

text, in his own time, was? If he knew that it was, what he would have it thought to be; why does he seem to assert upon hearsay only? If he knew not; why did he not inform himself? that he might either assert, with confidence, what he had found upon enquiry to be true; or not assert what could not be maintained. EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAMSII JURATO, QUI TAM MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO.

So much for Origen's veracity in argument, so unjustly aspersed by me, so compleatly vindicated by Dr. Priestley\*.

I will here take the liberty to remark upon the early fathers in general, whose memories are nevertheless to be revered, for their learning and the general sanctity of their characters; that in their popular discourses, and, in argument, they were too apt to sacrifice somewhat of the accuracy of fact to the plausibility of their rhetoric: or, which is much the same thing, they were too ready to adopt any notion, which might serve a present purpose, without nicely examining its solidity or  
its

\* "I have compleatly vindicated the character of Origen, "which you have endeavoured to blot." Second Letters, &c. p. 189.

its remote consequences. For this reason the great profit, which may arise from the study of their works; is rather that we may gather from them, what were the opinions and the practice of the whole body of the Church, in the times wherein they lived; than that any one of these writers is safely to be followed in all his assertions. Instances of precipitation, in advancing what occurred at the moment, and served a present purpose; may be found, I believe, in the writings of no less a man than St. Chrysostom. I shall mention one instance which occurs to me, which is very remarkable, though perhaps of little consequence. In his homilies upon the second epistle to the Corinthians, Chrysostom relates that it was not agreed, in his time, who the person might be, who is described by St. Paul as the "brother whose praise is in the gospel in all the churches:" that some thought St. Luke was meant under this description; others St. Barnabas: and, for a reason which he mentions, he gives it as his own opinion, that St. Barnabas was probably the person intended. But, in his first homily upon the Acts of the Apostles, he no less than three times brings up this text as an attestation of St. Paul to St. Luke's merit: for no other reason, but that this application of it served the purpose of a rhetorical amplification of St. Luke's praise.

Upon this circumstance of the notorious carelessness of the fathers in their rhetorical assertions, I should build my reply to the several passages which Dr. Priestley has produced from St. Chrysostom, to prove that it was allowed by Chrysostom, that the doctrine of the Trinity had never been openly taught by the Apostles; if those passages appeared to me, in the same light in which they appear to my antagonist. As for the particular passage in Athanasius, if any Unitarian, who reads the entire passage, thinks that the Jews there mentioned were converted, not unbelieving, Jews; I must apply to him, what Dr. Priestley remarks of those whom I esteem as orthodox, that "the minds of a few individuals may be so locked up, that no keys we can apply will be able to open them\*." For St. Chrysostom, I cannot find that he says any thing, but what I myself would say; that the Apostles taught first what was easiest to be learned, and went on to higher points, as the minds of their catechumens became able to bear them. If I could allow that he has any where said, what Dr. Priestley thinks he finds in his expressions, that the Apostles had been reserved and concealed upon an article of faith; I should say, that it was a thought that had hastily occurred to him, as a plausible solution of a difficulty, which deserved,

\* Importance of free enquiry, p. 59.

served, perhaps, no very diligent discussion in a popular assembly, and that he had hastily let it escape him. I am well persuaded, that any priest in Chrysofom's jurisdiction, who should have maintained this extraordinary proposition, that "the Apostles had temporized in delivering the fundamentals of the Christian faith," would have met with no very gentle treatment from the pious Archbishop of Constantinople. Had the priest, in his own vindication, presumed to say; "Holy Father, if I am in error, you yourself must answer for it. Upon your authority I adopted the opinion, which you now condemn; you have repeatedly said in your commentaries, upon the sacred books, that the Apostles and the Evangelists stood in awe of the prejudices of their hearers:" Chrysofom would have replied; "Faithless monster! is it thy stupidity, or thy baseness, that interprets, as an impeachment of the sincerity of the first inspired preachers, my encomium of their wisdom? But why should I wonder, that he should not scruple to slander his bishop, who spares not the Apostles and Evangelists." Had the priest been able to prove against St. Chrysofom, that he had, indeed, given countenance in his writings to such an error; the good father would have repented in sackcloth and ashes.

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As the mention of Dr. Priestley's quotations from St. Chrysostom has occurred ; I must not omit to do justice to a passage, which has suffered a little in the hands of this *emeritus* professor of Greek \* in the late academy at Warrington. I speak of the passage cited by Dr. Priestley, in his Second Letters, p. 94, from the first homily on the epistle to the Hebrews. In the Greek, as Dr. Priestley gives it, it is rank nonsense ; and not very intelligible, in Dr. Priestley's English. Dr. Priestley, to get it into English at all, has had recourse to an emendation. An “ ε̄ must be turned into και, or *some-thing else.*” Suppose ε̄ turned into και ; what will be the antecedent of the pronoun αὐτος in the Greek, or *himself* in Dr. Priestley's English ? Had Dr. Priestley consulted any good edition of St. Chrysostom, either the Paris edition of 1735, or the old Paris edition of Fronto Ducæus, or the Eton edition ; he would have found that ε̄ γαρ εἶπεν ὁ Θεός should be ε̄ γαρ εἶπεν ὁ Χριστός ; and that ε̄ should keep its place. “ Observe, says St. Chrysostom, the Apostle's prudence in the choice of  
his

\* “ I ——— taught it nine years, the last six of them at Warrington.” Second Letters, p. 202.

Ad summum, non Maurus erat, nec Sarmata, nec Thrax,  
Qui sumpsit pennas, *mediis sed natus Athenis.*

But “ the elements of the language, it seems, were not taught there.” [Ibid.] The professor indeed, had the elements been to be taught, had been ill qualified for his chair.

“ his expressions. For he has not said, *Christ spake*,  
 “ although he, [i. e. Christ,] was the person who  
 “ spake : but because their minds were weak, and  
 “ they were not yet able to bear the things con-  
 “ cerning Christ, *God*, he says, *spake by him.*”

The particular notion that Christ was the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the person who conversed with the Patriarchs, talked with Moses in the bush, displayed his tremendous glory at Sinai, and spake by the prophets ; is what St. Chrysofom thought the Hebrews not far enough advanced in the theory of revelation to bear. If he thought them too weak, to bear the general doctrine of our Lord's DEITY ; his judgement would be of little weight, since St. Paul thought otherwise. For, in the second verse of the first chapter of this epistle, the Apostle enters upon that abstruse subject, which in the first, according to Dr. Priestley's interpretation of St. Chrysofom, he is supposed to shun ; in the third verse, he goes deep into the mystery ; and, in the eighth, he applies to Christ what the Psalmist says of God, that “ his throne is for ever and ever, the “ scepter of his kingdom a scepter of righteous-  
 “ nefs :” and the manner, in which the words of the Psalmist are introduced, shews that the Apostle thought, that they, to whom he wrote, could not but join with him in this application. Dr. Priestley, I suppose, thought it as well to keep it out of  
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the reader's sight, that Chrysoſtom, in this very paſſage, ſpeaks of Chriſt as the Jehovah of the Old Teſtament. He thought it beſt to keep the true meaning of the paſſage out of ſight; and for this reaſon he choſe to follow the corrupt and ſenſeleſs reading of the Heidelberg edition (a bad copy of the Veroneſe text, in a very ſmall part only collated with the Palatin and Auguſtan MSS.) and rejecting an emendation unanimouſly received by later editors, who took the pains to rectify the text by a laborious collation of many MSS, to make the beſt of the paſſage for himſelf, by *correcting* in the wrong place. Thus indeed we have a beautiful ſpecimen of an ancient father *corrected by an Unitarian!*

I muſt not quit the ſubject of theſe quotations, without obſerving; that the Learned Reader, in this firſt homily of St. Chryſoſtom upon the epiſtle to the Hebrews, will find St. Chryſoſtom's own confutation of the proof, which Dr. Priſtley attempts to bring from his works; that it was a thing known and admitted in his time, that the Apoſtles had been ſilent upon the ſubject of our Lord's divinity; and that the orthodox, to account for this acknowledged fact, were reduced to the neceſſity of ſuppoſing that they temporized. What the ſilence of the Apoſtles, upon this ſubject, was; may be learned from the epiſtle to the Hebrews. What  
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St. Chrysoftom's opinion of their temporizing caution was ; may be learned from his first homily upon that epistle. Whoever reads only the two first sections of that homily, will perceive, that the prudence, which St. Chrysoftom ascribes to the Apostles, was a prudence in the manner of preaching mysterious doctrines, not a dishonest caution in dissembling difficulties. Had he ascribed to them any such base art ; the epistle to the Hebrews had been his confutation. His first homily on that epistle is the confutation of those, who, in ignorance, or in art, would ascribe to him so unworthy a notion of the founders of our faith.

## CHAPTER SECOND.

*Of the Church of Ælia, or Jerusalem, after Adrian.—Mosheim's Narration confirmed.—Christians not included in Adrian's Edicts against the Jews.—The return from Pella, a fact affirmed by Epiphanius.—Orthodox Hebrew Christians existing in the World long after the times of Adrian.*

**T**HE next fact that comes in question, is the existence of a body of orthodox Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem, after the final dispersion of the Jews by Adrian.

In the seventh of my letters to Dr. Priestley, I stated briefly, what I take to be the true account of the changes, which took place in the ecclesiastical state of Palestine upon the banishment of the Jews by Adrian. The ecclesiastical history of those times is so very general and imperfect; that whoever attempts to make out a consistent story from the ancient writers, which are come down to us, will find himself under a necessity of helping out their broken accounts by his own conjectures. In the general view of the transactions of that time, I agree almost entirely with Mosheim; who, in my judgement, hath, with great penetration, drawn forth the whole truth; or what must seem to us

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the truth, because it carries the highest air of probability; from the obscure hints, which the historian Sulpitius furnishes, connected with other hints, which, though unobserved by Dr. Priestley, are to be found in other writers of antiquity. Dr. Priestley speaks of a series of facts \*, and of many circumstances, which, he says, I have added to Mosheim's account, and must know that I added. If Dr. Priestley consulted that part of Mosheim's work, *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum*, to which the margin of my letters referred him (but in Mosheim, as in Grotius, it is likely that he turned to the wrong place): if he opened Mosheim in the place to which I referred; he must know that I have added no circumstance, to Mosheim's account; but such as every one, must add in his own imagination, who admits Mosheim's representation of the fact in its principal parts. He must know, that three circumstances in particular, which he is pleased to mention among my additions, are affirmed by Mosheim: the conflux of Hebrew Christians to Ælia; the motive which induced the majority to give up their ancient customs, namely the desire of sharing in the privileges of the Ælian colony; and the retreat of those, who could not bring themselves to give their ancient customs up, to remote corners of the country †. These were Mosheim's assertions before they were mine: and

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\* Second Letters, &amp;c. p. 192.

† Ib. p. 39.

Dr. Priestley either knows this; or, pretending to separate Mosheim's own account from my additions, he has not taken the trouble to examine what is mine, and what is Mosheim's.

It may seem, however, that to convict my adversary of the crime of shameful precipitance, in asserting what he has not taken the pains to know; or of the worse crime of asserting the contrary of what he knows; absolves not me of the imputation, that I have related upon the authority of Mosheim, what Mosheim related upon none\*. I will therefore briefly state the principles, which determine me to abide by Mosheim's account of the transactions in question. I take for granted, then, these things.

I. A Church of Hebrew Christians, adhering to the observance of the Mosaic Law, subsisted for a time at Jerusalem, and for some time at Pella, from the beginning of Christianity until the final dispersion of the Jews by Adrian.

II. Upon this event, a Christian church arose at Ælia.

III. The Church of Ælia, often, but improperly, called the Church of Jerusalem, for Jerusalem was no more, in its external form, that is, in its doctrines and its discipline, was a Greek

\* Second Letters, &c. p. 192.

Greek church ; and it was governed by bishops of the uncircumcision. In this my adversary and I are agreed. The point in dispute between us is, of what members the church of Ælia was composed. He says, of converts of Gentile extraction. I say, of Hebrews : of the very same persons, in the greater part, who were members of the ancient Hebrew church, at the time when the Jews were subdued by Adrian. For again, I take for granted,

IV. That the observation of the Mosaic law, in the primitive church of Jerusalem, was a matter of mere habit and national prejudice, not of conscience. A matter of conscience it could not be ; because the decree of the apostolical college, and the writings of St. Paul, must have put every true believer's conscience at ease upon the subject. St. Paul, in all his epistles, maintains the total insignificance of the Mosaic law, either for Jew or Gentile, after Christ had made the great atonement ; and the notion that St. Paul could be mistaken, in a point which is the principal subject of a great part of his writings, is an impiety, which I cannot impute to our holy brethren, the saints of the primitive church of Jerusalem \*. Again, I take for granted,

V. That

\* By the primitive church of Jerusalem, I mean the Hebrew Church before Adrian. The retreat to Pella was temporary ; and, I am inclined to think, of short duration ; and the Bishop, while he sat there, was still called the Bishop of Jerusalem.

V. That with good Christians, such as I believe the Christians of the primitive church of Jerusalem to have been ; motives of worldly interest, which would not overcome conscience, would, nevertheless, overcome mere habit.

VI. That the desire of partaking in the privileges of the Ælian colony, from which Jews were excluded, would accordingly be a motive, that would prevail with the Hebrew Christians of Jerusalem, and other parts of Palestine, to divest themselves of the form of Judaism, by laying aside their ancient customs.

Dr. Priestley asks me, “ Where, Sir, do you find in this passage [a passage of Sulpitius Severus which he cites] any promise of immunities to the Jewish Christians, if they would forsake the law of their fathers \*.” Nowhere, I confess, in this passage ; nor in any other passage of Sulpitius ; nor in any passage of any ancient, I may add, nor of any modern writer. But the question implies a false and fraudulent representation of my argument. I never spake, I never dreamed, of any promise of *particular* immunities to Jewish Christians, upon condition that they renounced the Mosaic law. I spake only of the general

\* Second Letters, &c. p. 42.

neral immunities of the Ælian colony, of which Christians might, and Jews might not partake.

Dr. Priestley alleges, that “ the historian [Sulpitius] says, that the object of Adrian was to “ overturn Christianity \*.” But whatever the emperor’s dislike to Christianity might be, there is little probability that, upon this occasion, he would be disposed to treat Christians with severity. The historian Sulpitius nowhere says, that the emperor’s edicts against the Jews extended to Christians; and the historian Orosius says expressly, that to Christians they extended not †. Was Orosius too late a writer to give evidence about these transactions? The historian of Corruptions is, I believe, some centuries later. His means of information therefore are fewer; and, were he well informed, his precipitance in assertion, and his talent of accommodating his story to his opinions, should annihilate the credit of his evidence. The testimony of Orosius, however inconsiderable, might of itself therefore outweigh the opinion of Dr. Priestley; if a feather only, in the one scale, be more than a counterpoise for a nothing in the other.

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\* Second Letters, &c. p. 42.

† ——— præcepitque ne cui Judæo introeundi Hierosolyman effer licentia, Christianis tantum civitate permiffa. Oros. Hist. lib. 7, cap. xiii.



The testimony, however, of Orosius is not without some indirect confirmation from other writers; and, what is more, from its consistency with other circumstances in the history of those times; with which the assertion of Sulpitius, that Adrian meant to wound Christianity through the sides of Judaism, will not easily accord. It is a notorious fact, that Adrian was not unfavourable to the Christians. The Church, in his reign, obtained a respite from persecution. The fury of its persecutors was restrained by the imperial rescripts to the provincial governors: who were directed not to proceed against the Christians, except by way of regular trial, upon the allegation of some certain crime: and when nothing more was alleged than the bare name of Christianity, to punish the informer as a sycophant. A rescript to this effect addressed to Minucius Fundanus, proconsul of Asia, is preserved by Justin Martyr in his first apology, and, after Justin, by Eusebius in his history \*. This equitable disposition of the emperor towards the Christians, is ascribed by Eusebius to the eloquent apologies of Quadratus and Aristides, and to the remonstrances of Serenius Granianus, the predecessor of Fundanus in the Asiatic proconsulate †. When the Jewish war broke out; reasons of state immediately took place, which would

\* Hist. Eccl. Lib. IV. c. 8 & 9.

† Hist. Eccl. Lib. IV. c. 3. & in Chron. ad ann. MMCXLII.

would greatly heighten the effect of any impressions, previously made upon the emperor's mind, by the pleadings of the Christian apologists, and the intercessions of what friends they might have among his courtiers. The Christians of Palestine refused to take any part in the Jewish rebellion; and they smarted under the resentment of Barchochebas, the leader of the insurgents. The earliest testimony now extant of this fact is, I believe, that of Eusebius in his chronicle \*. But the known impiety of Barchochebas, which renders it incredible that the Christians should inlist under his banners, sufficiently avouches the truth of the chronologer's assertion. The thing therefore in itself is highly probable, that the emperor should make the distinction, which Orosius says he did, between the seditious Jews and the harmless Christians; who had, indeed, been sufferers by their loyalty. The probability is still increased by certain circumstances mentioned by historians, which indicate a particular antipathy in the imperial court, at this time, to the rites of Judaism; which the refractory manners of the Jews might naturally excite. Spartian says, that a prohibition of circumcision was one of the pretences of the Jewish rebellion †. Modestinus

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\* Ad annum MMCXLIX.

† Movebant eâ tempestate & Judæi bellum, quòd vetabantur mutilare genitalia, Spartian. in Adriano.

the lawyer, as he is cited by Casaubon, alleges a rescript of Antoninus granting a permission to the Jews, to circumcise their own children. This rescript of permission, as it plainly implies, that the practice had been forbidden by some preceding emperor ; in some measure confirms Spartian's relation. All these circumstances put together, create, as the thing appears to me, the highest probability of the truth of Orosius's assertion ; that Christians were not included in the edicts of Adrian, by which the Jews were banished from Jerusalem. And although no author that I know of, beside Orosius, expressly mentions the distinction ; the contrary, that the Christians were included, is affirmed by no ancient writer. The distinction indeed, though not mentioned, is clearly implied in Epiphanius's assertion ; that the Hebrew Christians, after Adrian's settlement of the Ælian colony, returned from Pella, whither they had retired from the distresses of the war, to Ælia. For it happens, that this fact, of which Dr. Prietley does me the honour to make me the inventor, is asserted by Epiphanius \*. To his assertion Mosheim,

\* Epiphanius, having related that Aquila, the same person who afterwards made a translation of the scriptures of the Old Testament into Greek, was employed by Adrian as overseer of the works at Ælia ; proceeds in these words : ὁ τοῦτον Ἀκυλας, διαγων ἐν τῇ Ἱερουσαλῆμ, καὶ ὄρων τὰς μαθητὰς τῶν μαθητῶν τῶν ἀποστόλων ἰουδαίους

heim, relating the fact, refers. Relating the same fact, to Mosheim I. referred \*: to the very passage †, where Dr. Priestley, had he known what it is to examine authorities, before he pronounces upon them, might have found the reference to the original author. The confidence, with which he mentions this as a fact forged by me, is only one instance, out of a great number, of his own shameless intrepidity in assertion.

But to return from the detection of Dr. Priestley's fictions to the historical discussion. It

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ἀποβῆλας τῆς πίστεως, καὶ σημεῖα μεγάλα ἐργαζομένης ἰασίων καὶ ἄλλων θαυμάτων ἦσαν γὰρ ὙΠΙΟΣΤΡΕΨΙΑΝΤΕΣ ἈΠΟ ΠΕΛΛΗΣ τῆς δεκαπολείας εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ, καὶ διδασκοῦντες ἤνικα γὰρ ἐμελλεν ἡ πόλις ἀλισκεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων, προεχρηματισθῆσαν ὑπὸ ἀγέλῃ πάντες οἱ μαθηταὶ μεταστῆναι ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως, μελλούσης ἀρθῆναι ἀπολλυσθαι οἱ τινὲς καὶ μεταστῆσαι γενομένοι ὤκησαν ἐν Πέλλῃ τῆς προγεγραμμένης πόλεως πρὸς τὴν Ἰορδάνην, ἥτις ἐκ δεκαπολείας λογίται εἶναι· μίση δὲ τῆν ἱερουσαλήμ ἘΠΙΝΑΣΤΡΕΨΑΝΤΕΣ, ὡς ἴφην, σημεῖα μεγάλα ἐπετίμων· ὁ τοίνυν Ἀκυλάς, κ. τ. λ. Epiph. *De Pond. Et Mens.*

Whether this return of the Christians of Jerusalem, from Pella, took place in the interval between the end of Titus's war and the commencement of Adrian's, or after the end of Adrian's, is a matter of no importance. It is sufficient for my purpose, that these returned Christians were residing at Jerusalem, or more properly at Ælia, at the same time that Aquila was residing there as overseer of the emperor's works. Let not the Public therefore be abused by any cavils, which ignorance or fraud may raise, about the chronology of the return.

\* Letters to Dr. Priestley, p. 61.

† De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum. Sæc. II. § 38. not. \*

may seem, that my six positions go no further, than to account for the difuse of the Mosaic Law, among the Christians of Palestine, upon the supposition that the thing took place; and that they amount not to a proof, that a church of Hebrew Christians, not adhering to the rites of Judaism, actually existed at Ælia. To complete the proof therefore, I might appeal to Epiphanius's assertion of the return of the Christians of Jerusalem from Pella. But I will rather derive the proof, from a fact which I think more convincing than the testimony of Epiphanius; a fact, by which that testimony is itself indeed confirmed. I affirm then,

VII. That a body of orthodox Christians of the Hebrews were actually existing in the world, much later than in the time of Adrian.

The testimony of Origen I hold too cheap, to avail myself of his triple division of the Hebrew Christians, to prove the existence of the orthodox set in his time. It must be observed, however; that, were his evidence at all admissible, his distinction would be somewhat a stronger proof for me; than his general assertion, of which the generality is discredited by the distinction afterwards alleged, can be allowed to be for my antagonist. But I give him Origen. I will rest the credit of my

my seventh position, upon the mention which occurs in Jerom's commentary upon Isaiah, of Hebrews believing in Christ as distinct from the Nazarenes. Jerom relates two different expositions of the prophecy concerning Zabulon and Naphtali, delivered in the beginning of the ninth chapter of Isaiah; of which expositions he ascribes the one to the *Hebrews believing in Christ*; the other, to the *Nazarenes*. The character given of these Hebrews, that "they believed in Christ," without any thing to distinguish their belief from the common belief of the church, without any note of its error or imperfection, is a plain character of complete orthodoxy. For it was neither the disposition of Jerom, nor the fashion of his age, to miss any opportunity of proclaiming the vices of those, who were deemed heretics; unless upon occasions, when some rhetorical purpose might be answered by concealing them. But no rhetorical purpose was to be answered, in these notes upon Isaiah, by a concealment of any error, that had been justly to be imputed to these Hebrews; nor was Jerom at all concerned to maintain the particular exposition, which he ascribes to them. He had therefore no inducement to conceal their errors. But he taxes them with none. He had therefore no harm to say of them. They were orthodox believers: and the distinction of them from the Nazarenes, made by Jerom, is a plain proof that they were not observers

fervers of the Mosaic law. For although the Mosaic law was observed in the orthodox church of Jerusalem, until the time of the suppression of the Jewish rebellion by Adrian; it was after his time, by my adversary's own confession, confined to the Nazarenes and the Ebionites. If then the Hebrews believing in Christ observed not the Mosaic law in the time of Jerom: since the Mosaic law had been observed by the first race of believing Hebrews; it follows, that the practice of the Hebrew congregations had undergone a change, at some time before the age of Jerom. Dr. Priestley says, that great bodies of men change not their opinions soon. I say, they never change their old customs and inveterate habits, but from some powerful motive. Now in what period of the history of the church shall we find a posture of affairs, so likely to induce the Hebrew Christians to forsake the Mosaic law, as that which obtained in Palestine upon the final dispersion of the Jews by Adrian? If the orthodox Christians of the Hebrews, actually existing somewhere in the world from the reign of Adrian to the days of Jerom, were not members of the church of Ælia, dwelling at Ælia, and in the adjacent parts of Palestine; Dr. Priestley, if he be so pleased, may seek their settlement. It is no small difficulty upon my adversary's side, that he can neither tell "what became of the Christian Jews," upon his supposition, that with the unbelieving Jews they

“ were driven out of Jerusalem by Adrian \* ;” nor from what quarter the Greek church of Ælia was furnished with its members.

Upon these foundations, which a stronger arm than Dr. Priestley’s shall not be able to tear up, stands “ the church of orthodox Jewish Christians “ at Jerusalem † :” To which the assertors of the catholic faith will not scruple to appeal, in proof of the antiquity of their doctrine, whatever offence the very mention of the orthodox church of Jerusalem may give to the enraged Heresiarch ‡.

He asks me, what evidence I can bring that this church, even before the time of Adrian, was trinitarian. I brought evidence in my letters§, which he has not been able to refute. Upon his own principles, the acknowledgement of their orthodoxy in later times, by writers who would have acknowledged no orthodoxy of any unitarian sect, might be a sufficient evidence of their earliest orthodoxy.

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\* “ What became of the Christian Jews who were driven “ out of Jerusalem by Adrian, does not appear.” Second Letters, &c. p. 45.

† “ Thus ends this church of orthodox Jewish Christians at “ Jerusalem, &c.” Second Letters, p. 44.

‡ “ — I hope, (*id populus curat scilicet*) I hope, however, we “ shall hear no more of them as an evidence of the antiquity “ of the Trinitarian doctrine.” Second Letters, p. 45.

§ See particularly Letter VIII.



The evidence which I have brought, is nothing less than an attestation of a member of this earliest Hebrew church to the belief of himself, and his Hebrew brethren, in our Lord's divinity. But " *If they were Nazarenes, says Dr. Priestley, Epiphanius represents them as unitarian when John wrote \**." I have said, and I will never cease to say, that Epiphanius's representation justifies no such opinion. But what is Epiphanius's account of the Nazarenes, or what is any account of the Nazarenes, to the purpose; *if* the Hebrews of the church of Jerusalem were no Nazarenes? With Jerom, the Hebrews believing in Christ and the Nazarenes are different people.

• Second Letters, p. 45.

C H A P.

## CHAPTER THIRD.

*Of the Hebrew Church and its Sects.*

**I**T must strike the learned reader, that the Nazarenes mentioned by St. Jerom, in the passage to which I now refer of his annotations on Isaiah, must have been a different people from those mentioned by him with such contempt in his epistle to St. Austin, and described by Epiphanius. The Nazarenes, here mentioned by St. Jerom, held the Scribes and Pharisees in detestation; their traditions in contempt; and the Apostle St. Paul in high veneration\*. And yet these Nazarenes, of the best sort, were still a distinct set of people from the Hebrews believing in Christ; that is, from the orthodox church of Jerusalem, divested, in consequence of Adrian's edicts against the Jews, of what, until the time of those edicts, it had retained of the exterior form of Judaism. These remarks lead, I think, to a more distinct notion of the different sects of Hebrews professing the Christian religion, than I have met with in writers of ecclesiastical antiquity; a much more distinct one, I confess, than I

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\* See Jerom in Is. IX. 1. 2. 3. et VIII. 14, 19—22.

had myself formed, when I delivered the Charge to the Clergy of my Archdeaconry, which gave the beginning to this controversy; a notion however perfectly consistent with every thing, which I then maintained; and tending to establish the points, in which I differ from Dr. Priestley. As the question about the Hebrew sects is of great importance, I shall here briefly state the sum of what I have found concerning them in ancient writers, and then propound my own conclusions.

The Nazarenes are not mentioned by IRENÆUS. Irenæus says of the Ebionites \*, that they acknowledged God for the maker of the world;—that they resembled not Cerinthus or Carpocrates in their opinions about Christ;—that they used only the gospel by St. Matthew;—were over curious in the exposition of the prophets;—disowned the Apostle Paul, calling him an apostate from the law;—circumcised, and retained the Jewish law and Jewish customs. This description of the Ebionites occurs in that part of the great work of Irenæus, which is extant only in a barbarous Latin translation. In the passage which relates to their opinions about Christ, Cotelerius suspects a corruption; and for *non similiter* he would read *confamiliter*; supposing that Irenæus must have affirmed, and

\* Irenæus, lib. i. cap. XXVI.

and that he could not deny, their resemblance of Cerinthus and Carpocrates in that article; and this indeed is agreeable, as will appear, to the descriptions given of the Ebionites by other writers.

Irenæus in another place insinuates, that for wine, in the Eucharist, the Ebionites substituted pure water\*.

TERTULLIAN says, that Ebion made Jesus a mere man, of the seed of David only, that is, not also the Son of God; in some respect higher in glory than the prophets †. In another place ‡ he says, that Ebion was the successor of Cerinthus; not agreeing with him in every particular, inasmuch as he allowed that the world was made by God, not by angels: that as a consequence of Christ's mere humanity, he maintained the lasting obligation of the Mosaic law; because it is written, that the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. Tertullian says nothing expressly about the agreement, or disagreement, of Ebion and Cerinthus, in their notions of Christ; but the impiety of maintaining that he was a mere man, the son of Joseph, he ascribes to Carpocrates and

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Cerin-

\* Irenæus, lib. 5. c. II.

† De carne Christi. c. XIV.

‡ De Præscript. Hæret. c. XLVIII.

Cerinthus as well as Ebion; which renders the emendation, proposed by Cotelerius, in the Latin version of Irenæus, *confamiliter* for *non famuliter*, very probable: especially as a further agreement of the Ebionites and Gnostics, in their notions about Christ, is maintained by other writers. Tertullian again in another place, having mentioned "that St. Paul, writing to the Galatians, inveighs against the observers and defenders of circumcision and the law," adds, "this was Ebion's heresy\*." This however is no argument, that Ebion lived when that epistle was written. Tertullian means only to remark, that Ebion's tenets, in this article, were clearly confuted by St. Paul's writings. In the same place he mentions the denial of the resurrection of the body, by Marcion, Apelles, and Valentinus, as an error reproved in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. But no one, I imagine, would thence conclude that Marcion, Apelles, and Valentinus, were contemporaries of the Apostle,

ORIGEN, in the second book against Celsus, seems to comprehend the whole body of the Hebrew Christians under the name of Ebionites; and affirms, that they adhered to the law of their fathers †. But in another place, where he professes  
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\* De præscript. Hæret. cap. XXXIII.

† Contra Cels. lib. II. § 1.

to describe the Christianity of the Hebrews with the greatest accuracy, he divides the whole body into three sects. The first, like other Christians, entirely discarded the Mosaic law: the second retained the observation of the law in the letter of the precept; admitting however the same spiritual expositions of it, which were set up by those who discarded it: the third sort not only observed the law according to the letter, but rejected all spiritual expositions of it\*.

EUSEBIUS divides the Ebionites into two sorts, both denying our Lord's divinity; but the better sort believing the miraculous conception †. Both rejected the epistles of St. Paul, whom they called an apostate from the law. They used the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, and held the canonical gospels in little esteem. They kept both the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday. Origen and Eusebius, like Irenæus, mention not the Nazarenes by name.

St. JEROM, in his commentary upon Isaiah, mentions Hebrews believing in Christ ‡; and, as a distinct set of people from these believing Hebrews,  
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\* Contra Cels. lib. II. § 3.

† Hist. Ecc. lib. III. c. 27.

‡ In Is. IX. 1, 2, 3.

he mentions Nazarenes who observed the law \*, but despised the traditions of the Pharisees, thought highly of St. Paul †, and held the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. For, by an exposition of Is. VIII. 13, 14, which St. Jerom ascribes to them, it appears that they acknowledged in Christ the *יהוה אלהינו* [the Lord God of hosts] of the Old Testament. In his epistle to St. Augustin ‡, St. Jerom describes Nazarenes of another sort, " who believed in " Christ the son of God born of the virgin Mary, " in whom the orthodox believe;" but were, nevertheless, so bigotted to the Mosaic law, that they were rather to be considered as a Jewish sect, than a Christian. In the same place, he speaks of the Ebionites as a sect anathematized for their Judaism, and falsely pretending to be Christians; and in his commentary upon St. Matthew xii. he says they acknowledged not St. Paul's apostolical commission.

EPIPHANIUS describes the sect of the Nazarenes as a set of people hardly to be distinguished from Jews. He expresses a doubt, whether they acknowledged our Lord's divinity: but the terms, in which his doubt is expressed, argue that it was  
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\* In Is. *ibid.* & VIII. 14 & 19—22.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Hieron. Op. Tom. II. f. 341. A. edit. Froben.

groundless \*. He describes the Ebionites as resembling the Samaritans, rather than the Jews ;—as maintaining that Jesus was the son of Mary by her husband ;—that the Christ, descending from heaven in the figure of a dove, entered into Jesus at his baptism. He says, that the Nazarenes and the Ebionites had each a Hebrew gospel (the only one which they received), which they called the gospel by St. Matthew ;—that the copies received by the two sects were different : compared with the true gospel by St. Matthew, which the church receives, the Ebionæan copy was the least entire, and the most corrupt. He speaks of the Ebionites as a sect, which branched off from the Nazarenes, and appeared not till after the destruction of Jerusalem †.

From the testimony of an ancient writer, cited by Eusebius, it appears, that one Theodotus, a native of Byzantium, a tanner by trade, at the very end of the second century, was the first who taught the mere humanity of Christ ‡. He preached at Rome. His doctrine was an extension of the impiety of the first Ebionites : for, with them, the humanity of Christ was over at his baptism.

\* Charge to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of St. Albans, p. 25—28.

† Epiph. Hær. 30,

‡ Hist. Ecc. lib. V. c. 28.



tism \*. He was then deified; or, at least, exalted above humanity, by the illapse of the Christ.

NOW, from all this, I seem to gather, that, after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Hebrew church, if under that name we may comprehend the sects which separated from it, was divided into five different sects of people.

1. Jerom's Hebrews believing in Christ. These were orthodox Christians of Hebrew extraction, who had laid aside the use of the Mosaic law. They are the same with the first sect in Origen's threefold division of the Hebrew Christians.

2. Nazarenes of the better sort, orthodox in their creed, though retaining the use of the Mosaic law. As they were admirers of St. Paul, they could not esteem the law generally necessary to salvation. If these people were at all heretical; I should guess that it was in this single point, that they received the gospel of the Nazarenes instead of the canonical gospels.

3. Nazarenes of a worse sort, bigotted to the Jewish law, but still orthodox, for any thing that appears to the contrary, in their creed. These were

\* See more upon this point in Mr. Howes's sermon.

were the proper Nazarenes, described under that name by Epiphanius, and by St. Jerom in his epistle to St. Austin. These two sects, the better and the worse sort of Nazarenes, make the middle set in Origen's threefold division.

4. Ebionites denying our Lord's divinity, but admitting the fact of the miraculous conception.

5. Ebionites of the worst sort, denying the miraculous conception, but still maintaining an union of Jesus with a divine being, which commenced upon his baptism. These two sects, the better and the worst sort of Ebionites, make the last set in Origen's threefold division.

Thus we find a regular, and no unnatural, gradation; from the orthodox Hebrew Christian to the blaspheming Ebionite. It appears, however, that the impious degradation of the Redeemer's nature, though it took its rise among the Hebrew sects, was not carried to its height among them. A sect of proper Unitarians, holding the perpetual undeified humanity of the Saviour, made its first appearance at Rome, and boasted for its founder Theodotus, the apostate tanner of Byzantium: if, indeed, it was not the growth of still later times; which seems to be the opinion of the learned Mr. Howes, to whose judgement I am inclined to pay  
 I great

great regard. These two points, however, seem certain ; that the Nazarenes, even of the best sort, were a different people from the Hebrew brethren of the orthodox church of Jerusalem : and that the Nazarenes, even of the worst sort, were believers in the divinity of our Lord : in what extent they believed it, may, perhaps, seem to some a question in some degree still open to discussion. At present, I see no reason to recede from the opinion, which, with great authorities upon my side, I have hitherto maintained, of their entire orthodoxy upon that article. If, upon that particular point, I should, at any time hereafter, see cause to think myself mistaken ; my conviction is not likely to come from Dr. Priestley, but from a very different quarter. Mr. Howes's 9th number has just fallen into my hands. That learned writer, I perceive, thinks that it was but a subordinate divinity, which the Nazarenes acknowledged in our Lord. For his opinion I feel all the deference, which one scholar owes to the sentiments of another ; but not without the strongest prepossessions, I confess, at present in favour of my own.

CHAP.

## CHAPTER FOURTH.

*Of the Decline of Calvinism.—Of Conventicles.*

**I** NOW pass to the third fact, which I have taken upon me to establish; the decline of Calvinism, amounting almost to a total extinction of it, among our English Dissenters; who, no long time since, were generally Calvinists.

This fact is of no great importance in our controversy; as it is but very remotely connected with the question about the opinions of the first ages. The rapid decline of Calvinism, here in England, was alleged by me as an instance, in which Dr. Priestley's *theorem* about the rate of velocity, with which the opinions of great bodies of men change, would lead, in the practical application of it, to very erroneous conclusions. If my instance was ill-chosen; it will not immediately be a consequence, that Dr. Priestley's theorem, is a safe principle for the reformation of the history of the primitive church, in defiance of the testimony of the earliest writers extant. It would give me great pleasure to find myself in an error with respect to this fact; and to see reason to believe Dr.

Priestley, in his assertion, that the great body of our Dissenters at this day are Calvinists. So many Calvinists as are among them, so many friends there are to the catholic faith in all its essential branches; for the peculiarities of Calvinism affect not the essentials of Christianity. But I am sorry to say, that I must still believe, that the genuine Calvinists among our modern Dissenters are very few; unless, in a matter, which hath so lately fallen under the cognisance of the British legislature, I could allow Dr. Priestley's assertion, to outweigh the plain testimony of facts of public notoriety.

If the great body of the Dissenters are, at this day, Calvinists; upon what pretence was it, that the dissenting ministers, who, in the years 1772 and 1773, petitioned Parliament to be released from the subscriptions to which they were held by the 1st of William and Mary, arrogated to themselves the title of the **GENERAL BODY** of dissenting ministers of the three denominations in and about London? No true Calvinist could concur in that petition. For although I cannot admit, that the articles of our church, in the doctrinal part, affirm the strict tenets of Calvinism; yet they are in this part, what, as I conceive, no true Calvinist would scruple to subscribe; and, with respect to the great doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, Justification, and Grace; every genuine Calvinist would  
start

start at the very thought of being supposed, even tacitly, to concur in a request to be released from a confession of his faith : for none better understands than the genuine Calvinist, the force of that sacred maxim, “ with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Would Dr. Priestley insinuate, that his brethren of the rational dissent approached the august assembly of the British Parliament, with a petition founded upon false pretensions? Will he say, that they were, in fact, the minority of the body, of which they called themselves the generality? Will he say, that the Thirteen\*, who in the meeting of the General Body at the Library in Red-cross Street, on Wednesday December the 23d, 1772, divided against the vote for an application to Parliament to remove the restraints which the wisdom of our forefathers, by the Act of Toleration, had imposed; were the representatives of a more numerous body, than the Fifty-five who gave their suffrages for the motion†: who, at a subsequent meeting, suffered not the protest of the thirteen orthodox ministers, to be recorded in the Minutes of the business

\* See a pamphlet entitled, *A Collection of the several Papers relating to the Application made to Parliament, in 1772 and 1773, by some of the Protestant Dissenters, for Relief in the matter of Subscription, &c.* London, Printed for J. Wilkie, N<sup>o</sup> 71, St. Paul's Church-Yard. MDCCLXXIII.

† See Wilkie's Collection, N<sup>o</sup> III.

finess of the day; and with difficulty permitted their reasons to be redde \*. A proceeding, by the way, which clearly shews, how cordially these pretended friends of general toleration would delight, were they in power, to tolerate opinions which might differ from their own; and evinces the propriety of the prayer, which a sense of such wrongs, drew from a member of the orthodox minority,

“ From the power of such pretenders to superior  
 “ reason may GOD and THE BRITISH GOVERN-  
 “ MENT ever defend the orthodox Dissenters †.”

These thirteen spake only the sentiments of every Calvinist, when they said, “ We believe the doc-  
 “ trines of the articles to be both true and impor-  
 “ tant. We dare not therefore consent, to be held  
 “ up to view as those, who indulge any doubts re-  
 “ specting their truth, or at all hesitate about their  
 “ importance. We consider them as the basis of  
 “ our hope, the source of our comfort, and the  
 “ most powerful incentive to a course of sincere,  
 “ stedfast, chearful, obedience ‡.” It were injustice to these worthy men, to let any occasion pass of mentioning their names with the reverence which is due to them. David Muire, John Rogers, Thomas Towle, Samuel Brewer, Edward Hitchin,

Thomas

\* See Wilkie's Collection, N<sup>o</sup> II.

† See *Candid Thoughts on the late Application of some Protestant dissenting Ministers, &c.* By an Orthodox Dissenter. London, Printed for W. Goldsmith, N<sup>o</sup> 20, Paternoster Row, 1773.

‡ See Wilkie's Collection, N<sup>o</sup> II. § 3.

Thomas Oswald, John Potts, John Trotter, John Macgowan, George Stephens, Joseph Popplewell, Henry Hunter, John Kello; these were the venerable Confessors, who, on the 23d of December, 1772, and on the 27th of January in the following year, in meetings of the General Body of the three denominations, stood *for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*. "They thought themselves bound, they said, to contend earnestly for it against all who should oppose it." For this purpose they formed, as I gather from the documents of the times \*, into a distinct association. When the petition of the Rationalists was laid before the Parliament, they were firm and active in their opposition to it; considering the request as little less than a blow craftily aimed at the very vitals of the Reformed religion, and of Christianity, indeed, itself. They presented a cross petition †, signed, as they themselves said, by the Ministers as well as the Laity of the most respectable congregations of real Protestant Dissenters in town and country. But, when they wished to give credit and authority to their opposition, by boasting of their numbers: the most that they could say of the number of ministers, who had signed the cross petition was this; that they were "upwards of Fifty." The number of dissenting ministers in the whole kingdom

\* See Wilkie's Collection, N° III. and IV.

† Ibid. N° V.



dom was reckoned at that time to be about 2000. Of which 50 is just the fortieth part. When Dr. Priestley therefore affirms, that the "majority of the dissenting ministers are still Calvinists," he must be understood to use the same rhetorical figure, by which, in the Postscript of his first Letters to me, he swelled a few periods of Clemens Alexandrinus to the size of a whole book. By a computation formed upon that instance, I concluded the proportion of the Priestleian, to the vulgar *Whole* to be that of 1 to 48 : from this new instance it turns out somewhat larger.

Thus, from the evidence of public facts, I have the mortification to find Dr. Priestley's sentiments confuted, and my own confirmed, concerning the present state of Calvinism among the English Dissenters. And however it may now serve Dr. Priestley's purpose ; to magnify the numbers of the Calvinists ; his Rational brethren in the year 1772 spoke of their own majority in terms which implied, that the Calvinists were, in their judgement, a very inconsiderable part of the whole body of the Dissenters. " It is admitted," say the Rationalists, in the *Case of the Protestant dissenting Ministers and Schoolmasters*, " that the greater part of the dissenting ministers have not complied, and cannot in conscience comply with the subscription required by the Act of Toleration."

tion. The dissenting ministers in general are consequently liable to the penalties abovementioned." After stating the relief which they desired to obtain, they allege that the "generality of Protestant dissenting ministers, together with their people, are happily united in the object of the present application\*." The petitioning Dissenters it seems in the year 1772 thought the Calvinists so few and inconsiderable; that the ministers, who could not in conscience comply with the rite of William and Mary, and were happily united in the object of the application at that time made to Parliament, seemed to them the generality of Protestant dissenting Ministers. These gentlemen knew, it is to be presumed, the state of the dissent. They meant not to impose a lie upon the three estates of the British legislature. If then my notion of the decline of Calvinism is erroneous, Dr. Priestley will at least confess, that I am countenanced and supported, in my error, by a very respectable authority.

I am not ignorant indeed, that this authority was treated with little respect by the protesting Calvinists; who allowed no superiority of numbers on the side of the Rationalists†. It was pretended

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\* See Wilkie's Collection, N<sup>o</sup> I.

† See "Candid Thoughts, &c. by an Orthodox Dissenter," sect. II.

that many Calvinists concurred in the petition; some in mere tenderness for scrupulous consciences; many more upon that goodly principle, the source of all that orderly submission to the higher powers, which hath ever been so conspicuous in the Puritans of this country, that even a true faith is not to be confessed at the requisition of the magistrate. I bear that good will to Calvinism, that it gives me real concern to remember, that it hath ever been disgraced by a connection with such a principle. I am inclined however to believe, that the Calvinists, who, upon puritanical principles, concurred in the petition of the Rationalists, in the year 1772, were very few; and that the orthodox Dissenters were deceived in the idea which they had formed of the numbers of their own party. The requisition of the magistrate is now removed, and no pretence exists for a Puritanical reserve. I would ask them, what is now the state of the Dissenting ministry? Are they at this time a majority, are they any considerable part, of the dissenting ministers, who have qualified under the 1st of William and Mary? Every dissenting minister has now the alternative of qualifying, either by subscribing the doctrinal articles; or by a declaration which, by the 19th of his present Majesty, is accepted instead of subscription. But the Calvinist, even of the puritanical cast, holds himself bound to an open declaration of his faith; except in that extraordinary case, when

the interference of the magistrate makes it a duty, to disown his usurped authority, by refusing to confess with the mouth, what the heart believes. Every true Calvinist therefore will now qualify under the old Act of Toleration. And if they are but an inconsiderable part of the dissenting ministry, who have qualified in this manner; it is but too plain that Calvinism among the dissenters is almost extinguished. Inconsiderable, however, as I fear their numbers are, the Calvinists, for the soundness of their faith, are the most respectable part of our modern Dissenters: and though few, in comparison with the general mixed body of the Rationalists, I hope they are more numerous than the proper Unitarians.

So much for the principal facts which I engaged to establish. It may, perhaps, be expected, that I should take some notice of another, in which I have been charged with gross and wilful misrepresentation. Dr. Priestley, in his first letters to me, expressed high resentment, at the use which I had made in my Charge of the word *Conventicle*; as descriptive of meetings in which he and friends of his preside. To inform myself how far this resentment might be well founded, and for no other purpose, I searched the registers of certain courts for such an entry of the house in Essex Street, and for a record of such declarations on the part of the minister,

ter, as, by the 19th of his present majesty, are requisite to make a meeting, upon the pretence of Divine Worship, not a conventicle in the strict sense of the word. I told Dr. Priestley, that I had found neither entry of the house, nor record of the minister's declaration. Dr. Priestley replies, that I could, indeed, find no record of declaration; for none was ever made: but that I ought to have found an entry of the house; for that was duly made. Now the truth is, that I employed the clerks at the different offices to make the search, for which I paid the accustomed fee. I trusted to their report, which I find was not accurate. I believe the fact to be, as Dr. Priestley states it. The house is entered; but the minister has never declared his principles, as the law requires. The defence of a strong word, which has been taken personally, would be to me the most unpleasant part of the controversy, were it not that the style of Dr. Priestley's Second Letters, and some other publications upon that side, has put an end to all ceremony between me and the leaders of the Unitarian party. I therefore still insist, that all meetings under ministers who have not declared, whether the place of meeting be or be not entered, are illegal; and that the word *Conventicle*, as it was used by me in my Charge, was not misapplied.

CHAP.

## CHAPTER FIFTH.

*Of the Doctrines of Calvin.—Of Methodists.*

**I** NOW proceed to reply to Dr. Priestley's insinuation, that I have spoken with contempt of the doctrines of Calvin, which at the same time, he presumes, I really believe\*. He was in good humour with me, when he drew up this concluding paragraph of his third letter: for his reason for presuming that I believe what, he imagines, I speak of with contempt, is, that he is unwilling "to tax me with insincerity †."

If any where I seem to speak with contempt of the doctrines of Calvin, I have certainly been unfortunate in the choice of my expressions. It is one thing not to assent to doctrines in their full extent; quite another to despise them. I am very sensible that our articles affirm certain things, which we hold in common with the Calvinists: so they affirm certain things which we hold in common with the Lutherans; and some things which we hold in common with

\* Second Letters, &amp;c. p. 35.

† Ibid.

with the Romanists. It cannot well be otherwise; for as there are certain principles which are common to all Protestants, so the essential articles of faith are common to all Christians. Perhaps, in points of mere doctrine, the language of our articles agrees more nearly with the Calvinistic, than with any other Protestant confession. But I never was aware, till Dr. Priestley informed me of it, that I am obliged, by my subscription to the thirty-nine articles, to believe *every* tenet that is generally known by the name of Calvinistic \* : and, till the obligation is enforced upon me by some higher authority than his; I shall, in these matters, “stand fast in my liberty.” Nevertheless, I hold the memory of Calvin in high veneration; his works have a place in my library; and, in the study of the holy scriptures, he is one of the commentators whom I frequently consult. I may appeal to my own congregation at Newington, and to other congregations to which, by my situation, I am occasionally called to preach, to witness for me, that I never mention the Calvinistic divines without respect; even when I express, what I often express, a dissent, upon particular points, to their opinions. The respect with which they are mentioned in my Good-friday sermon, in which I asserted the doctrines of Providence on the one hand, and of Free-agency on the other, is, perhaps,

\* Second Letters, &c. p. 35.

perhaps, in Dr. Priestley's own recollection. In the passage to which he alludes, in my seventh letter to himself, he will find no contempt expressed of Calvinists, or of their opinions. The severity of the reflection falls on those, who have so speedily deserted a doctrine to which, for a long time, they were not without bigotry attached; while they not only maintained Calvin's tenets without exception, but seemed to think there could be no orthodoxy out of Calvinism. I consider it as the reproach of the Dissenters of the present day, that a genuine Calvinist is hardly to be found; except in a sect, conspicuous only for the encouragement, which the leaders of it seem to give, to a disorderly fanaticism. The rational Dissenter hath nothing in common with the Calvinist, except it be an enmity to the episcopal establishment of this country; and this he hath not so much in common with the Calvinistic churches, as with his own ancestors the factious Puritans.

It was, perhaps, an omission, that when the scarcity of Calvinists among the English Dissenters was mentioned, a distinct exception was not made in favour of natives of Scotland, formed into Calvinistic congregations, under respectable pastors of their own country and of the true Calvinistic persuasion, here in London, and perhaps in other parts of England. But I consider these as no part of our  
**English**



**English Dissenters.** They are members of another national establishment; who, residing here, may think that a conformity with the church of England might be interpreted as a desertion of their own communion. The rational dissenter may take no credit to himself, for their adherence to their old principles; nor are they involved in the reproach of his degeneracy.

While I thus repel my adversary's slanderous insinuation, of contempt expressed by me of Calvin's doctrines; the reflection, I doubt not, is arising in his breast, and with much secret satisfaction he says within himself, "He is making his peace, I see, with the Calvinists; but how will he get over my remark, upon the disrespectful language in which he has spoken of the Methodists? his brother churchmen \*!" To the burthen of that crime my shoulders, I trust, are not unequal. What if I frame my reply in terms, which Dr. Priestley's late publication furnishes: That whenever occasions shall arise, which may make it my duty, as a minister of the gospel, to declare my sentiments; I shall not wait for Dr. Priestley's leave, to "express my contempt of what I think to be despicable, and my abhorrence of what I think to be shocking †." The Methodist, I am sensible, professes much zeal for our common faith.

\* See Second Letters, &c. p. 35.

† Importance of free enquiry, p. 29.

**faith.** Many of his follies, I am willing to believe, proceed more from an unhappy peculiarity of temperament, than from any thing amiss in the moral dispositions of his heart. Let him then renounce his fanatical attachment to self-constituted uncommissioned teachers; let him shew his faith by his works; not the formal works of superstition and hypocrisy, but the true works of everlasting righteousness; the works of Fair-dealing, Charity, and Contineuce: let him do this, and churchmen will turn to him, and call him brother.

## CHAPTER SIXTH.

*Of the general Spirit of Dr. Priestley's Controversial Writings.—Conclusion.*

I HAVE replied more largely than I thought to do, to more than is deserving of reply in Dr. Priestley's Second Letters. But, as the controversy between him and the advocates of the catholic faith, is now brought, by his own declarations, to a state resembling that of a war, in which no quarter is to be given or accepted; I think myself at liberty to strike at my enemy, without remorse, in whatever quarter I may perceive an opening; and I think myself called upon, by the present situation of the controversy, not to suppress the remarks, which have spontaneously arisen in my own mind upon the perusal of his late writings. I fear he is too little redde but by his own party; and it is fit that it should be generally known, what spirit he is of.

He avows, indeed, with the greatest frankness, that the great object of his essays upon theological subjects, is to spread opinions among his countrymen,

men, from the press, and from his pulpit, which he flatters himself must end in the total demolition of the polity of his country in the ecclesiastical branch; the only branch, against which he thinks it prudent, as yet, to declare his antipathy. In his *View of the Principles and Conduct of the Protestant Dissenters, with respect to the Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution of England*, a pamphlet first published in the year 1769, after a picture, highly exaggerated I hope, of certain abuses among the clergy; which he refers to the principles of our hierarchy, but which, so far as they are real, are easily traced to very different causes; he, in the true spirit of patriotism, points out the remedy. His salutary advice is conveyed in the form of a prediction. He foretells, that in "some general convulsion of the state," such as he might hope our disputes with the American colonies, which were then visibly tending to an open rupture, might, in no long time, produce; "some bold hand, secretly impelled by a vengeful providence, shall sweep down the whole together\*." In later publications he discovers no aversion, to be himself the hand employed in that vindictive business; although his indiscretion, which he avows, and which seems indeed to be very great, when the glorious prospect of state convulsions warms and elevates his patriotic mind, should render

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\* View of the principles, &c. p. 12.

der him, it may be thought, unfit to have a part in the execution of any project, in which the success may at all depend on secrecy. In the dedication of his late *History of Corruptions* to Mr. Lindsey, he tells his friend (what might be fitting for an associate's ear, but it is a strange thing to be mentioned in public) "that while the attention of men  
 " in power is engrossed by the difficulties, which  
 " more immediately press upon them; the endeavours of the friends of reformation [that is, of  
 " those concealed instruments of vengeance on their  
 " devoted country], their endeavours in points of  
 " doctrine pass with *less notice*, and operate *without  
 " obstruction* \*." In his last publication he has thrown out many acute remarks upon the efficacy of "small changes in the political state of things,  
 " to overturn the best compacted establishments †:" upon the certainty, with which the exertions of himself and his associates operate to the ruin of the ecclesiastical constitution: upon the violence, with which causes, that lie dormant for a time, at last act. "We, he says, are, as it were, laying *gun-  
 " powder* grain by grain under the old building of  
 " error and superstition, which a single spark may  
 " hereafter inflame, so as to produce an instantane-  
 " nous explosion ‡." He shews, with great ability;

\* Dedication of *History of Corruptions*, p. vii.

† Importance of free enquiry, p. 39.

‡ Ibid. p. 40.

lity; that all measures of government, to support the ecclesiastical constitution, will be of no avail, if once a great majority of the people can be made its enemies \*. And, for this good purpose, he declaims in his *conventicle* to “enlighten the minds and excite the zeal †” of the mechanics of the populous town of Birmingham, with respect to the doctrines in dispute between himself and the assertors of that faith, which the Church of England holds in common with the first Christians. The avowal of these sentiments in himself, of hostility to the political constitution of his country; the attempt, to excite similar sentiments in the breasts of the “commonest people,” in whose breasts they cannot be expected to lie inactive, quietly expecting the event of literary discussion; such avowal, and such attempts are more, I should think, than can be justified by the right of private judgement upon speculative questions. Not that I would insinuate that they, in any degree, deserve the attention of our governors; for I am well persuaded that neither his doctrine, nor his principles, are gaining that ground among the people, which he seems to imagine. I am inclined indeed to think, that the advancement even of his Unitarian doctrine is but slow, except in his own head; in which it seems to

\* Importance of free enquiry, p. 41—44.

† Ibid. p. 29.

to be making hasty strides. In his good wishes to the constitution, I think better of many of his Unitarian friends, than to believe that they concur with him. And while Trade and Manufactures flourish at Birmingham; we may safely trust to the inducements, which every man there will find to mind his own business, to defeat the success of Dr. Priestley's endeavours to "enlighten and excite." It seems therefore unnecessary at present to think of "raising the dam, or of making it stronger." It will be the better policy of government, to let the brawling torrent pass. The attempt to provoke severities by audacious language, in order to raise a cry of persecution, if sedition, making religion its pretence, should meet with a premature check from the secular power; is a stale trick, by which the world is grown too wise to be taken in. If Dr. Priestley ever should attempt to execute the smallest part, of what he would now be understood to threaten; it may then be expedient, that the magistrate should shew, that he beareth not the sword in vain. But whatever Dr. Priestley may affect to think of the intolerance of Churchmen in general, and of the Archdeacon of St. Alban's in particular; a Churchman lives not in the present age so weak, who would not in policy, if not in love, discourage, rather than promote, any thing that might be called a persecution of the Unitarian blasphemy, in the person of Dr. Priestley, or of any of his admirers.

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A Churchman lives not so weak as not to know, that persecution is the hot-bed, in which nonsense and impiety have ever thrived. It is so friendly to the growth of religion, that it nourishes even the noxious weeds, which carry but a resemblance of the true plant in the external form. Let us trust, therefore, for the present, as we securely may, to the trade of the good town of Birmingham, and to the wise connivance of the magistrate (who watches, no doubt, while he deems it politic to wink) to nip Dr. Priestley's goodly projects in the bud: which nothing would be so likely to ripen to a dangerous effect, as constraint excessively, or unseasonably, used. Thanks, however, are due to him, from all lovers of their country, for the mischief which he wants not the inclination to do, if he could find the means of doing it. In Gratitude's estimation, the Will is ever to be taken for the Deed.

In his First Letters to me, and in former publications, Dr. Priestley professed to disbelieve an inspiration of the Apostles and Evangelists; in any greater extent, than might be consistent with the liberty, which he uses, of criticising their reasonings and their narrations. I had a hope that denying, as he does, our Lord's divinity, he still admitted, in some figurative sense, that "all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily." I had a hope, that he believed, at least, an unlimited inspi-  
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ration (since he disbelieves any nearer communion with the Godhead) of him to whom "the Spirit was not given by measure." I perceived, with concern, by his late publication, that "the plenary inspiration of Christ \* " is to be disbelieved, no less than that of the Apostles. The assertion, indeed, is qualified, by confining it to cases "with respect to which the object of their mission did not require inspiration." The object of their mission required, that the first preachers of Christianity should be infallible, in whatever opinions they maintained either about the nature of God, or the principles of his moral government; in whatever they taught, concerning the terms, or the means, of man's acceptance and salvation; and in the facts which they have related of the Redeemer's life. If in these things they were not infallible, if an appeal lies from their assertions, to any man's private opinions; who shall draw the line, where the truth of their preaching ends, and their error commences? If their inspiration was complete upon these subjects; it was, to all intents and purposes, *plenary*. If it gave them no light about the true system of the world, the circulation of the blood, or the properties of the Leyden Phial; it was not upon that account defective, as a religious inspiration. The distinction therefore between a plenary inspiration, and an inspiration extending only to cases in which

\* Importance of free enquiry, p. 35.

which the object of their mission required it, is vain and imaginary : and it is mere pretence, to profess a belief in the one, when the other is openly denied.

In his first Letters to me Dr. Priestley disavowed his belief of the inspiration of the Apostles as *writers* only \*. Our blessed Lord left no writings. When, therefore, the fulness of his inspiration is denied ; the denial must be understood of his inspiration, as an oral teacher. Dr. Priestley, therefore, must extend his disbelief of the inspiration of the Apostles to their oral doctrine ; unless he would be guilty of the folly of setting the disciple above his Lord.

It is some time since it was told me, that an admirer of Dr. Priestley's tenets, in conversation with a Divine of the Church of England, high in station and in learning, had maintained ; that our dying Lord's promise to the thief, that he should be with our Lord that day in paradise ; was founded on a mistaken notion, of him who gave it, about the state of the dead. Dr. Priestley's disciples well know, that the thief at this time is nowhere, and will not be in paradise before the resurrection. The leader of a party is not answerable for the absurdities of all his followers : I was unwilling, therefore, to make the

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\* First Letters, p. 132.

conclusion that Dr. Priestley himself ever would maintain, what he now maintains, the fallibility of Christ! I shudder while I relate these extravagancies, though it be only to expose them.

Dr. Priestley has given free scope to the powers of his eloquence, upon the subject of my pretended injustice to illustrious characters, living and dead. If injustice may be committed by praise bestowed where it is unmerited, no less than by censure injuriously applied; Dr. Priestley may find it more difficult, than I have done, to refute the accusation. A character now lives, not without its eminence, nor, I hope, without its moral worth, which Dr. Priestley seems to hold in excessive admiration; and upon which he is too apt to be lavish of his praise. Few, who are acquainted with his writings, will be at a loss to guess, that the character I speak of is HIMSELF. As the analyzer of elastic fluids, he will be long remembered: but he sometimes seems to claim respect as a GOOD CHRISTIAN, and a GOOD SUBJECT. If upon any branch of Christian duty my conscience be at perfect ease; the precept, "Judge not," is that which, I trust, I have not transgressed. The motives, by which one man is impelled, are, for the most part, so imperfectly known to any other; that it seems to me cruel to suppose, that the evil, which appears in men's actions, is always answered by an equal malignity in their minds.

minds. I have ever, therefore, held it dangerous and uncharitable, to reason from the actions of men to their principles; and, from my youth up, have been averse to censorious judgement. But when men declare their motives and their principles; it were folly, to affect to judge them more favourably than they judge themselves. I shall, therefore, not hesitate to say, that after a denial of our Lord's divinity, his pre-existence, and the virtue of his atonement; after a denial, at last, of our Lord's plenary inspiration; after a declaration of implacable enmity to the constitution under which he lives; under which he enjoys the licence of saying what he lists, in a degree in which it never was enjoyed by the first citizens of the freest democracies; the goodness of his Christianity, and his merit as a subject, are topics upon which it may be indiscreet for the encomiast of Dr. Priestley to enlarge.

FOR eighteen months or more it hath been the boast of the Unitarian party, that the Archdeacon of St. Alban's hath been challenged to establish facts which he had averred; that he hath been insulted in his character, as a scholar and a man; charged with ignorance, misrepresentation, defamation, and calumny\*; and, that under all this he hath continued

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\* Second Letters, &c. Preface, p. xviii. pp. 1, 39, 47, 160, 161, 163, 208, & alibi passim.

speechless \*. He hath at last spoken; in a tone which, perhaps, will little endear him to the Unitarian zealots. It matters not. The time seems yet so distant, when the train which they are laying may be expected to explode; that the danger is exceeding small, that he will ever be reduced to the alternative of renouncing his faith, or relinquishing his preferments: or to the harder alternative, which Dr. Priestley seems to threaten †, “ a prison, with a good conscience, or his present emoluments without one.” If those happy times, of which Dr. Priestley prophesies, should overtake him ere his course is finished; when an Arian, or Socinian Parliament ‡, shall undertake the blessed business of a second reformation, and depose Archbishops from their thrones, and Archdeacons from *their couches of preferment*; he humbly hopes, that he may be supplied with fortitude to act the part, which may not disgrace his present professions. The probability, however, seems to be, that ere those times arrive (if they arrive at all, which we trust they will not) my antagonist and I shall both be gone to those unseen abodes, where the din of controversy and the din of war are equally unheard. There we shall rest together, till the last  
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\* See Animadversions on Mr. White, p. 84.

† See Second Letters, &c. p. 88.

‡ See Second Letters, p. 87.

trumpet summons us to stand before our God and King. That whatever of intemperate wrath, and carnal anger, hath mixed itself, on either side, with the zeal with which we have pursued our fierce contention, may then be forgiven to us both; is a prayer which I breathe from the bottom of my soul, and to which my antagonist, if he hath any part in the spirit of a Christian, upon his bended knees will say, AMEN.

F I N I S.



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