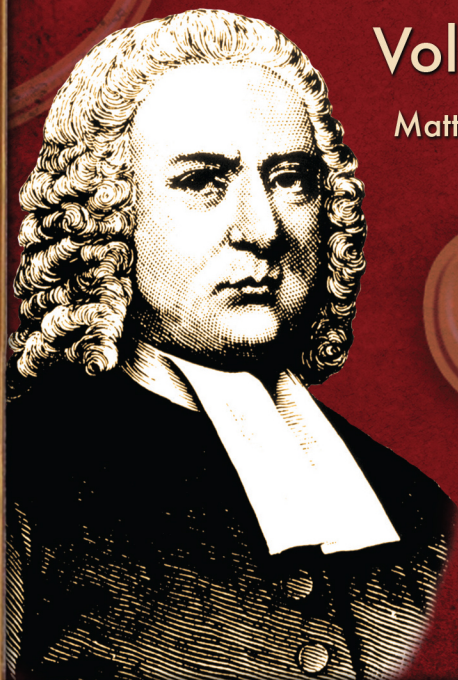


EXPOSITION OF THE OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS

John Gill, D.D.

Volume 7 of 9

Matthew through John 8



**EXPOSITION OF
THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

By John Gill, D.D.

Complete & Unabridged

VOL. 7 of 9



Chamberlin print

Freeman Sculp!

JOHN GILL, D. D.

-London- Published by Mathews & Leigh, 1809



EXPOSITION

OF THE

New Testament

BY

John Gill D. D.

IN THREE VOLUMES

Vol. 1.

LONDON

Printed for Mathews & Leigh, Strand.

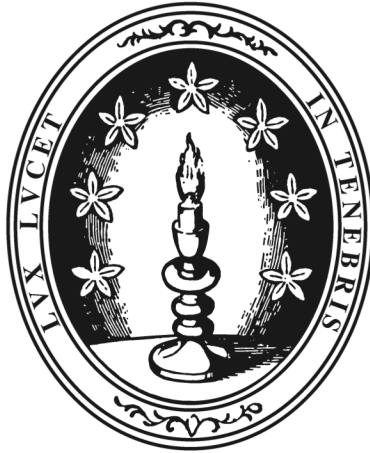
1809.

Hewitt & Co. Printers St. Dunstons

*Reprinted in 2016
by*

THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.

No. 1 Iron Oaks Drive
Paris, Arkansas 72855
(479) 963-3831



THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM

lux lucet in tenebris

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

ISBN # 978-1-57978-482-9

AN
EXPOSITION
OF
The New Testament :

IN WHICH

THE SENSE OF THE SACRED TEXT IS GIVEN ;

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL TRUTHS ARE SET IN A PLAIN AND EASY LIGHT ;

DIFFICULT PASSAGES EXPLAINED ; SEEMING CONTRADICTIONS RECONCILED ;

AND WHATEVER IS MATERIAL IN

The various Readings and several Oriental Versions is observed.

THE WHOLE ILLUSTRATED WITH NOTES, TAKEN FROM
THE MOST ANCIENT JEWISH WRITINGS.

BY JOHN GILL, D. D.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London :

PRINTED FOR MATHEWS AND LEIGH, 18, STRAND,

BY W. CLOWES, NORTHUMBERLAND-COURT.

1809.

THE PREFACE.

THE sacred books, of which the following work is an exposition, are of equal authority with the oracles of God, the writings of the Old Testament; being, as they, divinely inspired; and are profitable to the same ends and purposes, of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness: they contain things of the greatest moment and importance to the spiritual and eternal welfare of men, to the honour and interest of the great Redeemer, and to the glory of God; and therefore should be most carefully perused, most diligently searched into, and, as much as in us lies, should be studiously, distinctly, and rightly explained, and which is attempted in this performance.

The *four evangelists* have recorded every thing material, relating to the great author and institutor of the Christian religion, the sum and substance of the Gospel, our Lord Jesus Christ: they give us an account of his harbinger and forerunner, John the Baptist; of his parents, his wonderful conception and birth, with several amazing circumstances belonging thereunto; they describe his qualifications for his important office, his mien and deportment, his dress and diet, his conduct and conversation, his preaching and baptism, his success and his followers, his imprisonment and death; and point at several prophecies as fulfilled in him: but above all, they are chiefly concerned with Christ himself; they declare him to be the son of God, and the son of man; they shew his descent as man, to be from the kings of Judah, and from the ancient patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; yea, they trace it to the first man Adam; they tell us who his real mother, and supposed father were; of what family they were, and where they lived; what their characters, worldly circumstances, and business of life; they speak of his miraculous conception, through the power of the Holy Ghost, and of the time and place of his birth; and of what went before, or followed after, necessary to be known; they record some things done in his infancy, and childhood; they give us an account of his baptism, and of his entrance on his public ministry; they have written down his sermons to his disciples, and the multitude; his several discourses with the Jews, chief priests, Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees; his parables, proverbial sayings, and pithy sentences; they make mention of various surprising miracles wrought by him, which were proofs of his deity, divine mission, and Messiahship; they inform us of the names and number of his apostles, whom he sent forth to preach in his name; and they relate his fatiguing journeys which he took, to do good to the bodies and souls of men, by healing diseases, and preaching the Gospel; as also the temptations of Satan he was exercised with, in the wilderness; the reproaches and insults of men, he endured; his sufferings and death, with all the circumstances attending it; and likewise his resurrection from the dead, and ascension to heaven: and the whole is a complete history of the life of Christ, for what one evangelist omits, another relates; and all is done with the utmost impartiality, simplicity, and truth; and there is an entire harmony and agreement between the sacred historians; for though there are some things, in which at first sight they may seem to contradict each other, these will admit of a fair reconciliation, and which is observed in the following exposition.

That divine history, called *the Acts of the Apostles*, is a narrative of what was done by them, after our Lord's ascension to heaven, in pursuance of the commission and instructions which he had given them. This book informs us, how that the apostles, by the orders of Christ, waited at Jerusalem until the day of Pentecost, when they were filled with the extraordinary gifts of the spirit; particularly with the gift of speaking with divers tongues, whereby they were qualified to preach the Gospel to people of all languages, for which they had received a commission from Christ: here we are told what success they met with at Jerusalem, where, according to the express command of Christ, they began to preach; what numbers of converts were made, and what a famous church was there raised; and how, that after the death of Stephen a persecution arose, by which havoc was made of the church, and many that had ministerial gifts, were scattered

abroad, and went every where preaching the word ; but at first to the Jews only, by which means churches were also raised in other parts of Judea, and in Samaria, and Galilee, and likewise in Syria and Phœnicia, and in other places. Particularly this book gives an account of the travels of the Apostle Paul in the Gentile world ; of his ministry, and the success of it among them ; of the miracles wrought by him ; of his sermons, discourses, and disputations ; of the speeches he made before kings and councils, before the Jewish sanhedrim, and the Roman governors ; of the many hardships he endured, and the many dangers he was exposed unto ; and of his great service and usefulness, in promoting the Gospel and interest of Christ : in short, this book acquaints us with the progress of the Gospel, both in Judea, and among the Gentiles ; with the first planting of Gospel churches, and the establishment of Christianity in the world ; with the time when, the manner in which, the means whereby, all this was done ; and is a wonderful display of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God ; and must be read with pleasure and profit, by all those that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

The *Epistles*, written by several Apostles to the churches, which were planted by them, or to particular persons they were concerned with, are of the utmost consequence : these contain all things in them, relating to faith and practice ; here the doctrines of the Gospel are set in a clear and distinct light ; the several duties of religion to be performed, whether personal or relative, whether to be done in public or in private, in the world or in the church, in the closet or in the family, are exhorted to, and pressed upon the best of motives, with the strongest arguments, from right principles, and to right ends and purposes ; every thing belonging to the nature and constitution of a Gospel church, to the rule and government of it, to its officers, its order and discipline, is to be collected from hence : for whatever is written in them, was written, not only for the use of the then churches, and the ministers and members of them, but for the use of the churches of Christ, in all ages of time ; in them are milk for babes, and meat for strong men ; and rules are laid down, instructive to societies, and particular persons ; and which are useful in moral and civil, as well as in Christian life ; or which serve to regulate and influence the outward life and conversation, as well as direct and encourage to the exercise of spiritual graces, and to an observance of evangelical ordinances.

The book of the *Revelation* of the Apostle John, with which the canon of Scripture is closed, is a prophetic history of what should befall the churches of Christ ; and of the most remarkable things that should come to pass in the world, especially in the Roman empire, from the resurrection of Christ, unto the end of the world ; so that these sacred books, put them all together, are an account of things from the first, to the second coming of Christ ; and shew, what has been, and will be done in the world ; and what the followers of Christ are to believe and do, and what they must expect will be accomplished in the world, in the churches, and in them ; until he shall appear, who is the author of their religion, the object of their faith, hope, and love ; and whose coming they sincerely desire, and heartily wish and pray for.

Now to have a true knowledge, and right understanding of books of so much concern as these are, must be desirable to all, who have a just value for them, and esteem of them ; but who is sufficient for these things ? It is certain, that the Holy Spirit, who has dictated the sacred Scriptures, and inspired holy men of God to write them, is the best interpreter of them ; and he does lead and guide his people, more or less, into the truths contained in them ; his assistance is therefore in the first place to be implored, and without it, nothing of this kind is to be attempted : to compare spiritual things with spiritual, or in other words, to compare Scripture with itself ; the more obscure and difficult parts of it, with those that are more plain and clear, must be of considerable service, for the better understanding them : and to observe the analogy of faith, the agreement of truth with itself, and of one truth with another ; the form of sound words, the summary of Gospel truths, to be collected out of the sacred writings, with which the sense of every passage must agree, is of exceeding great use in this affair ; to which may be added, the gracious experience that the man of God has in himself, of the truth, power, influence, and weight of the word of God upon his own soul ; for next to the Scriptures themselves, in general, it should be considered, whether such an interpretation of a particular passage, is agreeable to the common experience of the saints, and to a man's own : a competent knowledge of the languages, in which the Scriptures are written, cannot fail of being very helpful in the study of them, in many instances ; and indeed, all arts and sciences, liberal or mechanical, yea, every thing within the compass of knowledge,

natural, moral, and civil, contribute more or less unto, and assist in the understanding of the books of the New Testament; and among the many helps, and several means which should be, and are made use of for such a purpose, knowledge of the affairs of the Jews, of their rites and ceremonies, of their laws, usages, customs, and traditions, as they were in and about the times of Christ and his apostles, is not the most inconsiderable; which will appear, if it be observed,

That our Lord Jesus Christ, whose life is written by the four evangelists, was a Jew himself; he was born of Jewish parents, in the land of Judea; he was brought up in the Jewish religion; he conformed to their laws, rites, and customs, throughout the whole of his life, which were lawful to conform unto; he was sent to the people of the Jews, as a prophet, and to them only; to them he delivered his sermons, with them he frequently discoursed, and among them he wrought his miracles; in short, among them he lived and died: now it can't be thought, but that he should speak in the dialect of that nation, should express himself in words and phrases, which were in common use; and refer to various things, and allude to rites and customs in practice among them; wherefore the knowledge of their phraseology, or way of speaking, of their usages and customs, must be of singular use, for the understanding of many things said by Christ, which are recorded in the four Evangelists: let it also be further observed,

That all the apostles of Christ, and all the writers of the New Testament, were Jews; they were educated in the Jewish religion; they preached to the Jews only, in the times of Christ; and first to them, after their commission was enlarged, to preach to the Gentiles; and the first churches even among the Gentiles, greatly consisted of Jews, to whom the Epistles were written, as the Epistles themselves shew: now can it be imagined, but that notwithstanding divine inspiration, and though they wrote in the Greek language, they would retain the idioms and forms of speech, to which they had been used; and that they would allude to rites and customs, they had been observant of, and the people also to whom they wrote? Had the books of the New Testament been written by Englishmen, though inspired by the Holy Ghost, doubtless there would have appeared many Anglicisms in them, as it is notorious enough there are in them abundance of Hebraisms; and that they would have referred to the rites and customs of their own nation, as these have done: wherefore the knowledge of the Jewish language and customs, must be of service for the better understanding of various things, to be met with in the writings of these men: to which may be added,

That Judaism properly so called, as it was a peculiar religion, and distinct from Christianity, though not contrary to it, was in being, and in full force, in Christ's time, though near its end, and was abolished in the times of the apostles, and Christianity was established by them: now it is not reasonable to believe, that an affair of this nature should be transacted, that there should be an abrogation of Jewish rites and ceremonies, and a setting up of Gospel ordinances, which were to continue to the end of time, that in the disputes with the Jews upon this subject, and the account that is given of this matter, there should be no references and expressions, which the knowledge of Jewish affairs can give us light into.

Being convinced by these considerations many years ago, I set about the reading of the most ancient writings of the Jews, I could come at, in order to satisfy myself of the truth of these things, and the better to understand the New Testament; and though this has been attended with great difficulty, fatigue, and labour, and may have hindered the pursuit of other useful studies, I cannot say I repent of it. The method I took at first, and which I all along followed, was to write down in an *Adversaria*, or note-book, what occurred in reading, which I thought might be of any service, to give light to any passage in the New Testament, and which I put against that passage: in a course of time this book began to swell, which put me on thoughts of making these notes public; which I sometimes inclined to do in one way, and sometimes in another; but at length determined to do with them as I have done, in the following work: the writings I have chiefly read with this view, are the Targums, or Chaldee paraphrases of the Old Testament; the Misnah, or the Jews' oral law; the two Talmuds, Jerusalem and Babylonian; the Rabbot, or mystical expositions of the ancient doctors of the Jewish synagogue; the book of Zohar, with others of a later date, and less note; and since I have made so much use of these writings in the following exposition, especially in the first volume, I think myself obliged to give my readers some account of them, shewing their antiquity and usefulness, and shall begin with

The TARGUMS, or Chaldee paraphrases, these being the most ancient writings the Jews have:

it is certain there were Targums, before the composition of the Talmud, and even of the Misnah, since there is express mention made of them in both ^a; and it is no less certain, that they were in being and use, in the times of Christ and his apostles. The text in Isa. lxi. 1. as read by our Lord in the synagogue of Nazareth, Luke iv. 18. better agrees with the Chaldee paraphrase of it, than with the Hebrew text, or the Septuagint version; and it is a clear case, and which was doing great honour to the Targum on Psal. xxii. 1. that Christ expressed himself when he hung upon the cross, not in the Hebrew words of the text, but in the Chaldee paraphrase of it; saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani; not Azabthani, as in the Hebrew text, but Sabachthani, which is the word used in the Targum we now have; and it is very likely the Apostle Paul had the names of the Egyptian magicians Jannes and Jambres, out of the ancient paraphrases; since these are mentioned in the Targum of Jonathan, on Exod. i. 15, and vii. 11, and on Numb. xxii. 21. The word Targum signifies an interpretation, or exposition of any book, or the translation of one language into another; and the Targums are translations of the Hebrew text, into the Chaldee language, with an explanation of it: for they are not bare literal versions, though that of Onkelos is pretty much so; but they also expound the text, and explain the sense: the rise and original of these paraphrases, is generally thought to have been the corruption of the Hebrew language, in the Babylonish captivity; where the Jews having disused, greatly forgot their mother tongue; wherefore upon their return to their own land, it became necessary, that men skilful both in the Hebrew and Chaldee languages, should explain to the common people in the Chaldee tongue, the Scriptures, which were read to them every sabbath-day in Hebrew, in order to their understanding them with profit; and this practice, both of reading the Scriptures every sabbath-day, and which James says was of old time, Acts xv. 21. and of interpreting them in the Chaldee language, is said by Maimonides ^b, to be from the times of Ezra: and so the Jews in the Talmuds ^c, explain those words in Neh. viii. 8. *So they read in the book, in the law of God, this is the Scripture; distinctly, this is the Targum; and gave the sense, these are the verses;* in the Jerusalem Talmud, it is, these are the accents; *and caused them to understand the reading, this is the distinction of the accents;* in the above Talmud it is, this is the Masoreth; though it may be this practice might not obtain quite so soon, but rather some time before the coming of Christ; for the Syrians being mixed with the Jews after the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, their language began to be corrupted, and the Syriac dialect prevailed; and still more so, when Judea came to be reduced into the form of a Roman province, and was reckoned to Syria, and was subject to the governors of Syria; by which means the Syro-chaldee language became the common dialect of the Jews, and was so in Christ's time; which made those Targums, or Chaldee paraphrases necessary: and by all accounts it appears, to have been the custom in the synagogue, for the reader to read a verse in the Hebrew tongue, and then for the interpreter to render it in Chaldee; and this he did from his own judgment, *viva voce*, and without book ^d: for though he might write for his own use, and for the private use of others, which might be the original of written paraphrases; yet it does not appear that there were any committed to writing for public use, until those of Jonathan ben Uzziel, and Onkelos were composed, of which it will be necessary to give a particular account.

JONATHAN BEN UZZIEL was a scholar of Hillel the elder; Hillel, 'tis said ^e, had fourscore scholars, and the greatest of them was Jonathan ben Uzziel: this Hillel was prince, or president of the Sanhedrim, a hundred years before the destruction of Jerusalem ^f, and so thirty years before the birth of Christ; it was at the beginning of the reign of Herod ^g, about three years after he began to reign, that he entered upon his presidentship ^h, and he governed Israel forty years ⁱ. This his scholar wrote a paraphrase upon the prophets, as is agreed on all hands. The Jews extol it as a divine work, and say that the substance and doctrine of it were handed down to him from the inspired prophets Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi; they speak even of miraculous operations performed, whilst it was composing ^k, and that even angels themselves pay a regard to it: now

^a Misn. Megilla, c. 4. sect. 10. T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 115. 1. Megilla, fol. 3. 1. & Kiddushin, fol. 13. 1. & 49. 1. Sanhedrin, fol. 94. 2.

^b Hitchot Tephilla, c. 12. sect. 16.

^c T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 37. 2. Megilla, fol. 3. 1. & T. Hieros. Megilla, fol. 74. 4.

^d Maimon. Hitchot Tephilla, c. 12. sect. 10, 11.

^e T. Bab. Succa, fol. 28. 1. & Bava Batha, fol. 134. 1.

^f Juchasin, fol. 19. 2. Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 24. 2.

^g Juchasin ib.

^h Shalshet Hakabala, fol. 18. 1.

ⁱ Juchasin, fol. 19. 1.

^k T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 3. 1. Bava Bathra, fol. 134. 1.

though these are extravagant flights of their's, yet by how much the greater is the authority of this work with them, by so much the greater is its use to refute them, when it can be made use of for that purpose; and in favour of Christianity, as it often may.

This is the only paraphrase which is generally allowed to be written by him. The Jews say¹, that he attempted to write one upon the Hagiographa, but was forbidden by a voice from heaven, because therein was the end of the Messiah, or the time of his coming. There is a paraphrase upon the law which bears his name, but it is generally thought to be falsely ascribed to him, because of its style, the traditional senses of Scripture which are in it, and other things which it is observed, shew it to be of a later date than the true *Jonathan*. Yet there are some, both Jewish^m and Christian^a writers, that do affirm that he did write a *Targum* upon the law: and indeed it seems strange, as Elias Levita^o observes, might be objected, that he should write a paraphrase upon the prophets, and not begin with the law; and it is certain, that the traditional sense of Scripture obtained in his time; and the Talmudists may as well be thought to borrow from him, as that paraphrast from them; and as to the main thing objected to, that there is mention made in it of the six orders of the *Misnah*, and therefore must be of a later date than that, it may be observed, that Hillell, the master of Jonathan, first reduced the substance of the traditions of the elders into such an order, as will be seen hereafter; and as for exotic words, and names of places of a more modern date, they may be interpolations since: the style, I confess, is with me the greatest objection; however, seeing it is not agreed upon; I shall not insist upon it being his. I go on to consider the paraphrase of

ONKELOS, its antiquity and authority. This writer seems to be cotemporary with Jonathan ben Uzziel: it is affirmed, that they saw each other^p. Onkelos, according to what is said of him, was a disciple of Hillell, as well as Jonathan; for it is asserted^q, that Hillell and Shammai would not teach him one word of the law until he was circumcised; and he has frequently called Onkelos the proselyte, and is said to be proselyted in their days; and, by what is reported of him, he lived to the times of R. Gamaliel, the master of the Apostle Paul, who died about eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem: for it is said^r, that when R. Gamaliel died, Onkelos the proselyte burned as much goods at his funeral, for the honour of him, as amounted to seventy Syrian pounds of silver. His paraphrase, which is only upon the five books of Moses, is, for the most part, a strict version of the Pentateuch into Chaldee, and is rather a mere translation than a paraphrase. It is written in a very clean style, and nearest to the Bible, which have made some think, that it is the oldest paraphrase extant: and even Dr. Owen^s, who expresses himself with a great deal of warmth against some other paraphrases, yet says of this, that "it keeps close to the text, for the most part, rendering the words in the sense of the Holy Ghost; nor does he purposely wander into old wives' fables, as is usual with all the rest: led by which reason alone, (adds he,) I conjecture, that this paraphrast lived before the destruction of the city." His Targum is in great esteem with the Jews, as appears from its being inserted after the text of Moses, verse for verse, in the ancient manuscripts of the Pentateuch, and is in continual use with them. Elias Levita says^t, we are obliged, every week, to read a section (of the law) twice, once in the Scripture, and once in the Targum of Onkelos. Indeed, they too much magnify this version, and make it equal with the sacred Scripture; the sense of it they represent as traditionally handed down from Mount Sinai, which being delivered from one to another, he received it from the mouth of R. Eliezer and R. Joshua^u; and they say, that when he added any thing, it was not from his own judgment, but was given him from Sinai^v; and, as before observed concerning Jonathan's paraphrase, the greater the authority of this version is with them, the more pressing it is upon them, when it is used with advantage against them.

There are other paraphrases of less authority, and of an uncertain age, which notwithstanding

¹ T. Bab. ib.

^m R. Menachem apud Eliam Levitam in Prefat. Methurgeman. & Shalshalet Hakabala, fol. 20. 1. Asarias in Meor Enaim, c. 9. fol. 50. 2.

ⁿ Galatin. de Arcan. Cathol. ver. 1. 1. c. 3. Helvicus de Paraphr. Chald. c. 2. Shickard. Jus Regium, c. 1. p. 20.

^o Prefat. Methurgeman.

^p Shalshalet Hakabala, fol. 19. 2. Tzemaoh David. par. 1. fol. 28. 2.

^q Zohar in Lev. fol. 30. 2.

^r Zohar in Gen. fol. 28. 4. Tzemaoh David ib.

^s T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 11. 1.

^t Theologoumena, p. 425.

^u Prefat. Methurg.

^v T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 3. 1.

^w Gloss. in T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 49. 1.

have their usefulness. The Jerusalem Targum contains only fragments upon the Pentateuch, upon here and there a verse, written in a very coarse and different style. The paraphrases of the five books, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Solomon's Song, Ruth, and the Lamentations, and of the Hagiographa, the books of Psalms, Job, and Proverbs, commonly ascribed to R. Jose the Blind, it is not known by the Jews, Elias Levita says⁷, who are the authors of them. Until of late years there were no Targums upon the two books of Chronicles made public: these were first published by Beckius in the years 1680, 1683, with notes upon them; and in the year 1715, David Wilkins published another edition of them from a Cambridge manuscript. Some have thought that the author of these was Jonathan ben Uzziel². The general use of these paraphrases is to assist in the explication of words of difficult interpretation, and especially such as are but once used in the Bible; and for the confirming the sense of many passages respecting the Messiah, and are useful in many controversies, especially with the Jews, Papists, and Socinians. That worthy and learned prelate, Bishop Kidder³, expresses his sense and judgment of them in the following manner: "I must own, that I have from my youth had a mighty veneration for the Chaldee paraphrasts, and think them, next to the sacred text, one of the choicest treasures the learned Christians do enjoy: they are of marvellous use to us in our disputes against the Jews, not to say Socinians also. It is no hard matter to shew the various and vast usefulness and advantages, which we may receive by them; but this would require a treatise by itself. I have always thought that we were obliged to bless God for such a treasure." I proceed

To give an account of the Talmuds, both Jerusalem and Babylonian. The word Talmud signifies doctrine; and the work, so called, contains in it the sum and substance of the doctrine of the law, according to the Jews: it consists of two parts, the Misnah and Gemara; the former is the text, the latter is made up of the disputations and decisions of the doctors upon it. I begin with

The MISNAH, which may be rendered Deuterosis, or Deuteronomy, a secondary or repeated law; for the Jews suppose, that the law was repeated to Moses, and an explanation of it given, which they call the oral law. The book that bears this name was composed by R. Judah, called the saint, who lived in the times of Antoninus the Roman emperor: he flourished, according to Buxtorf^b Anno Christi 150. It is said, by the Jews^c, to be compiled one hundred and twenty years after the destruction of the temple; the occasion of it was this; R. Judah observing that the Jews were in a state of exile, and were scattered among the nations, and fearing lest the traditional law, which had been handed down from their fathers, should be entirely lost in process of time, collected together as much of it as he could himself; and wrote to the Jews, in all parts, to send to him what they could recollect they had received from their ancestors; or had by them in papers and schedules; which being communicated to him, he put together, and being finished, it was at once received by the Jews, as the pandect, or body of their civil and canon law. But now, though this body of laws was compiled, and put together in this form and order, it must not be thought that this was the rise and date of the traditions, or laws themselves, any more than the body of laws collected in Justinian's time, out of writers that were three hundred years before, can be imagined to be of no earlier date than his times. It is a clear case, that the materials of the Misnah were in being before the compilation of it by this Rabbin; yea, that many of the traditions were written before for private use, and which was allowed. Maimonides^d says, that "from the days of Moses our master, unto R. Judah, there was nothing composed which was taught publicly, concerning the oral law; but in every age the head of the sanhedrim, or a prophet that was in that generation, might write for himself a memorial of the things he heard from his master; and he taught them publicly by word of mouth, and so every one wrote for himself." To which agrees what another writer says^e, "before R. Judah, no book was written concerning the oral law; but this before was the law and custom in Israel, the wise men received one from another, and taught the Misnah by word

⁷ Prefat. Methurgeman.

² S. Clark apud Castell. Lex. Polyglott. col. 2613. V d. Beckii Not. in Targ. 1 Chron. ii. 54.

³ Preface to the 3d Part of his Demonstration of the Messiah, p. 12. Ed. fol.

^b Recensio Oper. Talmud, p. 229

^c Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 30. 2. Shalshalet Hakabala, fol. 23. 2.

^d Prefat. ad Yad Chazaka.

^e R. Joshua Hallevi Halichot Olam, c. 1. p. 12, 13.

“ of mouth, as it was delivered ; but the scholars made marks to their traditions, and wrote them, lest they should forget them ; but they hid them, and called them the Misnah consists, from the times of the compiler of it, up to the times of Christ and his apostles, and beyond them. Egesippus, a writer of the second century, and who was a converted Jew, is said, by Eusebius^f, to make mention of several things which he had from the unwritten traditions of the Jews : and the same^g writer observes of Josephus, who lived in the first century, before and after the destruction of Jerusalem, that being an Hebrew of the Hebrews, he very accurately related some things out of the Jewish Deuterosis, or Misnah, or rather their Misnic Baraita, or exotic doctrine. And some learned men^h, as Bochartus, Van Dale, and Hudson, have been of opinion, that the Hebrew books Josephus speaks of, not only design the sacred Scriptures, but Rabbinical writings extant in his time. At the time that Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem, and burnt the houses of it, there were in it, 'tis said, four hundred and eighty synagogues, and in every one were a library and a school ; the library was for reading, or for the Scripture, and the school for the Misnahⁱ ; and in one of these schools the Apostle Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel ; where he was taught the Misnah, the law of the fathers, and became exceedingly zealous of their traditions, Acts xxii. 3. Gal. i. 14. and some have thought, that the parchments he left at Troas, 2 Tim. iv. 13. were of the same kind with the schedules, or volumes of secrets, in which the scholars of the wise men wrote the traditions they received from their masters : and certain it is, that the traditions of the elders were in being in the times of Christ, which were risen to a considerable bulk, which he takes notice of, and of which the Scribes and Pharisees were very tenacious, Matt. xv. 2—6. Mark vii. 3—13. Before the times of Christ lived Hillell and Shammai, the heads of the Misnic schools, and who opposed each other in the sense of the traditions, and added new ones. Jerom^k says of them, “ Shammai and Hillell arose in Judea not long before the Lord was born ; the first of which may be interpreted a *destroyer*, and the other *profane* ; because by their traditions, and διδασκαλιαι, Misnic doctrines, they destroyed and defiled the precepts of the law.” And though these traditions were not committed to writing, so as to be publicly read, yet they were reduced into a compendium, and ranged into an order under certain heads, *viva voce*. Before the days of Hillell, 'tis said^l “ they read six hundred orders of the Misnah, from the times of Moses, on whom be peace, unto the sons of Bethira ; but Hillell put them into six orders by word of mouth, which comprehended the law henceforwards, that so it might not be forgotten ; and this was done at the beginning of the reign of Herod.” And in such a division, and order, is the written Misnah compiled. Long before these men were the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees in being ; the latter had their name from Sadock, a disciple of Antigonus, a man of Socho ; which Antigonus was the successor of Simeon the Just, the last of Ezra's great synagogue, who lived in the times of Alexander the Great : these, among other things, denied the oral law, or Misnah, rejected the traditions, and professed to adhere to the scripture only, and therefore were called Karaites, or Scripturarians^m. This division was made in the times of the Maccabees, or Hasmoneans ; so that it seems manifest, that before this sect arose, the traditionary sense of scripture, and the law, generally obtained. And it may well be concluded, that the foundation of traditions was laid quickly after the times of Ezra, and the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, which by degrees came to a considerable bulk before the times of Christ. The Jews indeed date their oral law from Mount Sinai, and even prefer it to the written law, and say very extravagant things in favour of it ; and even a very grave writerⁿ of their's observes, concerning the Misnah, that “ the brevity of its words, the elegance of its composition, its beautiful order, the manner of handling things, with the division of it, if a man looks upon them in a true light, must own, that flesh and blood could never compose any thing like it, but by divine assistance.” However, this must be said, that it is a work of singular advantage and usefulness ; by which we learn what where the ancient usages and customs of that people, what the

^f Hist. Eccles. l. 4. c. 22.

^g Demonstrat. Evang. l. 6. p. 291.

^h Vid. Hudsoni Notas in Joseph. Antiq. l. 9. c. 10. sect. 2.

ⁱ T. Hieros. Megilla, fol. 73. 4. & Cetubot, fol. 35. 3r.

^k Comment. in Isaiam, l. 3. Tom. V. fol. 17. I.

^l Juchasin, fol. 19. 2. Shalshet Hakabala, fol. 18. 1.

^m Maimon in Misn. Abot, c. 1. sect. 3. Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 20. 2.

ⁿ R. Sangari, Sepher Cosri. par. 3. sect. 67. p. 247, 248. Ed. Buxtorf.

traditions of the elders the Scriptures speak of, what are agreeable to the word of God, and what not: and as the learned Wagenseil^o observes, "in the whole of it no blasphemy is to be found, nothing in opposition to Christians, even no fable, yea, nor any thing that is very foreign from reason: it contains only the mere traditions of the fathers, and is the body of the Jewish law, which formerly was not written:" and, for my own part, I am obliged to say, that no one book in the world, excepting the Holy Scriptures, has been of that use and service to me, as this has been, together with the following.

The TALMUD, or *Gemara*, is the commentary on the Misnic text, and consists of the disputations and decrees of the doctors concerning the sense of the traditions, and is twofold; the one is called the Jerusalem Talmud, and the other the Babylonian Talmud.

The *Jerusalem Talmud* is so called, either from the place where, or from the dialect in which it was written, or from the Jews in the land of Israel, for the sake of whom it was composed. The author of it was R. Jochanan, president of a school in the land of Israel, with the help of two of the disciples of R. Judah, Raf and Samuel; and it was finished about the year 230^p: but being written in a coarse style, and nothing near so pure and clean as the Misnah, and abounding with exotic words, was not had in great esteem by the Jews. Jerom^a seems to have respect to this when he says, "how many are the traditions of the Pharisees, which to this day they call Deuteroseis, or Misnic laws? and how many dotting fables I cannot turn over? neither will the bulk of the book admit of it;" since there is nothing of the fabulous kind, in the Misnah, nor is the bulk of that book large: not so large as a Bible, and is sometimes published in almost as small a compass as one of our Testaments; though indeed there is not much that can be called fable in the *Jerusalem Talmud*.

The *Babylonian Talmud* was written for the sake of the Jews in Babylon, and other parts, the former not meeting with general acceptance; this was not the work of a single man, but of many successively, who were employed for the space of two or three hundred years in collecting the disputations, decisions, and sense of the ancient doctors, about the civil and canon laws of the Jews: this was begun by R. Ase, pursued by Maremar, and at length finished by R. Avina, about the year of Christ 500^l. There were 311 years between the Misnah, and this, according to the computation of some.⁴ This work does not contain the sense of the compilers of it, or of the Rabbins in their age, but the decisions of the ancient doctors, even of Hillel and Shammai, and others who were before the times of Christ. For, as the learned Buxtorf^l well observes, though the Talmudic work was collected into one body some hundreds of years after Christ; yet the matter of it was disputed in the famous schools of Babylon, Sora, Nahardea, and Pompedita, and written down in books, partly before Christ, and partly in the time of Christ, and a little after. It is generally received by the Jews, and is of wonderful use in various respects. Says the learned Braunius⁴, "though it is a work merely human, and not delivered by God, as the Jews rashly imagine; yet nevertheless, if ever any book was written besides the sacred Scriptures, of great use, not only for the better understanding of tongues, especially the Hebrew and Chaldee, by which God has manifested salvation to us in his word, but in order to search out the antiquity, and the more hidden learning of the Chaldeans, Syrians, Egyptians, and other people, their manners, rites, and customs, and all the mysteries both of the Jewish religion and polity, and especially those things which make for a clearer exposition of the *Old and New Testament*, that, beyond all doubt, is the Talmudic work." And a little after he adds, "what slothfulness is that? what perverseness? what ignorance? to neglect, and even send to hell the Talmudic work; a work most ancient, which is composed for this end only, that posterity might have an exposition of the law and prophets? What is the Misnah else but a continued exposition of the law of Moses, digested into certain books? what is the whole Talmudic work, but a most rich treasure of Jewish antiquities, rites, manners, and all mysteries, both of polity and religion, from the times of Alexander the Great, at least, to the sixth century, after the birth of

^o Prefat. ad Tela Ignes, p. 57.

^p Ganz Trzemach David, par. 1 fol. 31. 2.

^l Epist. Algasie, qu. 10. fol. 55. l. tom. III.

^a Ganz Trzemach David, par. 1. fol. 33. 1, 2. & 34. 1. 612.

Buxtorf. Rab. Biblioth. p. 425.

⁴ Kaba R. Abraham ben David apud Ganz. ib. fol. 34. 1.

^l Gram. Chald. & Syr. p. 402, 403.

⁴ Selecta Sacra, l. 5. Exercitac. 2. sect. 26, 27. p. 611,

“ Christ ?” Of the same opinion was the learned Wagenseil^w; “ we are not afraid (says he) likewise to defend this, that in the Gemara, as well as in the Misnah, are many profitable things; nor can any kind of learning be mentioned, which out of that may not be helped and adorned.—Especially the Talmud serves to illustrate the Holy Scriptures, and is of so great use truly to understand the words, laws, manners, and institutions of the Jews mentioned in them, that there is no book in the world which can be of more service that way.”

MAIMONIDES, as he is commonly called, or R. Moses ben Maimon, has abridged the whole Talmud, Misnah, and Gemara, in a work of his which is called *Yad Chazaka*; which is written in pure Hebrew, in a clean, neat, and easy language, clear of that crabbed and rugged style, in which the Gemara especially is written; and free of all the knotty questions, and objections, and intricate disputes of the doctors, and of every thing which has the appearance of fable; the whole contains nothing but the traditions of the Jews, their rites, customs, and usages, civil and religious, digested in the best order and manner; and is the best system of their civil and canon law that is extant: it is justly an admired work, and of excellent use. The Jews have a common saying concerning him, “ from Moses to Moses there is none like this Moses.” Of what service this performance of his is for the better understanding the laws of Moses, may be seen in those extracts which our learned countryman, Mr. Ainsworth, has made out of it in, his excellent Commentaries upon the Pentateuch. And now, though this work was compiled about the beginning of the *thirteenth century*, yet inasmuch as it is only a compendium of the Misnah and Talmud, and a collection of the various traditions of the elders, and of the civil and canon law of the Jews in ages past, it is to be considered, as to the matter and substance of it, as of equal antiquity with the Misnic and Talmudic writings; and he is as good a voucher for the ancient rites and usages of the Jews, as can well be desired, and whose fidelity is to be depended upon, as well as his judgment. In the last edition of the Talmud, his work is referred to in almost every page.

The RABBOT, are ancient commentaries on the five books of *Moses*, and upon five others, viz. *Solomon's Song*, *Ruth*, *Lamentations*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Esther*; and are written, partly in an historical, and partly in an allegorical and mystical way. The author of them was Rabba bar Nachmoni, who lived about the year of Christ 300^x; or rather he may be said to be a compiler of them, for he does not give his own sense and interpretation of Scripture, but collects together the explanations of the doctors, that had lived in preceding ages: for as a Jewish^y chronologer observes, “ though he was the head of the university at Pumbeditha in Babylon, yet he gathered and collected together all the mystical explications of the land of Israel, (*i. e.* of the doctors that had lived there,) and wrote them in order.” And so Jarchi^z calls the first part of this work, an historical and mystical interpretation of the land of Israel, *i. e.* of the Rabbins in it; so that this work, as to the antiquity of it, answers at least to the three first ages of Christianity.

The book of ZOHAR, is a *Cabalistic* commentary upon the *Pentateuch*; it is generally ascribed to R. Simeon ben Jochai, as the author of it, who was a disciple of R. Akiba, who died about fifty years after the destruction of the temple, and about the year of Christ 120^a; though some say he only began it, and his disciples finished it^b, which will make no very considerable difference in the antiquity of it; others affirm^c, that he wrote nothing of it, nor his son, but their disciples wrote it, about sixty years after his death; but then, as another writer who observes the same says^d, they composed it as they received it from him; so that the substance of it was his, being communicated by him, or his son, unto them; but by the style of it, which is even and uniform, it does not seem to be the work of different persons; and be it wrote by whomsoever, it is a collection, not only of the discourses of R. Simeon, and his son Eleazar, and of their cotemporaries, but of the Jewish doctors, that lived in Palestine, both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem; it is of great fame and authority with the Jews, and is agreed on by them, that whatever in it does not disagree with the Talmud, and what is

^w Prefat. ad Tela Ignea, p. 63, 64, 65, 68. Vid. Con-
stat. Carmin. Lipman. p. 581.

^x Buxtorf. Rab. Biblioth. p. 326.

^y Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 32. 2.

^z Comment. in Gen. xlvii. 2.

VOL. I.—NEW TEST.

^a Buxtorf. de Abbreviat. p. 190.

^b Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 30. 1.

^c Shalshet Hakabala, fol. 23. 1.

^d Juchasin, fol. 42. 1.

not explained in the Talmud, and is explained there, should be received as authentic*: and it is worthy of notice what the Jews remark, that there is no mention made of the Talmud throughout the book; from whence they conclude, that it must be written before it; and certain it is, that the style of it does not at all savour of novelty, but seems to be as near to the style used in the time of Christ, as any thing extant; but whether it is so ancient as they suppose, I will not say; yet evident it is, that in abundance of instances, there is a very great likeness in it, with the phraseology of the New Testament. The editors of the Sultzbach edition of it, gave their readers reason to expect, there would be published by them in a short time, *Zoharistic Parallels*, on the New Testament; whether ever such a work was published, I know not; if it has been, I have not had the happiness to have seen it, which might have been helpful to me in this work; to which may be added, that there are interspersed in it several ancient treatises, or extracts out of them, or fragments of them; particularly the ancient book of Bahir, said to be the most ancient of all the Rabbinical books; the author of it was R. Nechunia ben Kanah, who lived under the second temple, before the destruction of it, 30 or 40 years before Christ, and was cotemporary with Jonathan the paraphrast^f: this same Rabbi, whom Grotius^e calls Nehumias, is said by him to be fifty years before Christ; and who reports that he should say, that the time of the Messiah signified by Daniel, could not be deferred longer than those fifty years. There are other writers of a later date, which are made use of by me, though sparingly; as Jarchi, Aben Ezra, Kimchi, R. Abraham Seba, and others; some learned men affect to smile, when such are referred to, with respect to the use of a phrase or a custom, for the illustration of any part of Scripture; but there will be no reason to indulge the sneer, when it is considered, that there is very little difference in the customs and usages of the Jews, in one age from another; they are a people tenacious of their rites and ceremonies; and besides, the same book of traditions is the rule of their conduct now, which was in ages past; and it may be observed, that such of their writers who are most conversant with their ancient books, frequently use words and phrases peculiar to them.

The general objection to Talmudic and Rabbinical writings is, that they are stuffed with fables, idle tales, impertinences, and fooleries; and nothing is more common, than to represent the Rabbins as a set of romantic and fabulous writers, as foolish, stupid, and dotards; and this is plentifully done for the most part, by such who have never read them. That there are no fables in the Talmud, and other Jewish writings, I will not say; there were Jewish fables in the apostles' time, Tit. i. 14. and if they can be thought to be the same as in the Talmud, it is a proof of the antiquity of it, as to that part of the things contained in it: however, I will venture to say, that many, if not most of the things that are reckoned fables, are not strictly such; but have something significantly solid and instructive in them. Mythology, or delivering things divine, moral, philosophical, and historical, by way of fable, was much in use in the eastern nations, and very early obtained, and particularly among the Jews; Jotham's fable of the trees, of the olive-tree, fig-tree, vine, and bramble, discoursing together, is a very known one, and a flagrant instance of what is suggested; and from them, the Greeks and Romans received their mythic way of speaking and writing; Pythagoras, and other philosophers, learnt from them, or the Egyptians, or both, the way of communicating their secrets by symbols, and enigmas. The fables of Æsop, which introduce birds and beasts speaking, are notorious to every one, and whom I greatly suspect to be a Jew^h, and his fables Jewish ones; or if not, his way of writing seems to be taken from them: these, if considered only in their literal sense, must be ridiculous and absurd; and some have been so simple and foolish, as to understand them in no other way; and have fancied there was a time, when beasts and birds could speak; and have been confirmed in it, by the Scriptural instance of Balaam's ass: but when a man is master of the morals of them, he perceives there's something solid and instructive in them, and that they are the fruit and produce of a fine invention, and an ingenious mind. Many things, historical, moral, and civil, and others in natural philosophy, and even as some think in chymistry, are delivered in fables by Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*; and why should not the Jewish writers be thought to take such a method; partly by these pleasant and artificial stories, to allure the more simple to reading, and partly to

* Juchasin, fol. 42. 1.

^f Buxtorf. Rab. Biblioth. p. 319, 320, Juchasin, fol. 63. 2.

^e De Veritat. Relig. Christ. l. 5. sect. 14.

^h Vid. Wolf. Heb. Biblioth. Vol. I. p. 135.

exercise the ingenious, in the search of the hidden things of wisdom and knowledge, as well as to relieve and recreate their minds, in hard and difficult studies? And this is not my own private sense, but the sense, as of Jewish writers of the best note¹, so of many Christian writers, as Galatinus², Fagius³, Dilherrus⁴, Selden⁵, Wulferus⁶, Muhlius⁷, Vorstius⁸, Gaffarellus⁹, Buxtorf¹⁰, and others. I will not undertake to be an Oedipus, to unriddle the mythology of the Jews; but I'll single out one or two instances, which appear, at first sight, to be most monstrous and absurd, and attempt their explanation. They tell us¹¹ of the first man Adam, that when he was created, his stature was so high, that he reached from heaven to earth; that his body was so large, that it extended from one end of the earth to the other; or, as elsewhere said¹², he looked from one end of the world to the other; and that when he rebelled against God,¹³ he laid his hand upon him, and lessened him, and so reduced him to the bulk and size that men are generally of; but now, who are most to be laughed at, the authors of this fable, or those who take it in the literal sense, and laugh at them? Can any man in his senses think, that any man, or set of men, could devise and tell such a story as this, in hopes of meeting with credit among any rational creatures? The sense of the fable is, that the power of man at his first creation reached to all things under the heavens, and upon the earth; that he had dominion over the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fishes in the sea; and that his knowledge was extended to all creatures and things in the universe; but that when he sinned against God, his authority over the creatures was weakened, and his knowledge lessened: and so, in a few words, it represents the state of man in innocence, his fall, and the sad effects of it. Again, it is a very common thing with them to speak of a feast that God will make for the righteous in the world to come; against which time the Leviathan is salted, and when a large ox, the Behemoth of Job will be served up, and a fowl of an incredible size will be a part of the entertainment, and a desert of the most delightful fruits of the garden of Eden will be set, and wine will be drunk, which has been kept in the grape from the six days of the creation¹⁴. Now, though there might be some persons who took all this in the gross and literal sense, as I have observed in the note on Luke xiv. 15. yet they sadly mistook the sense of the authors of it; for as Gaffarellus observes¹⁵, "what madness is it to imagine, that God should salt up this dragon, or whale, called Leviathan, and that it should afterwards be kept till the last day, to make a feast for those that shall then have no more need to eat? And what excellent entertainment should God bestow upon his children, when their cheer should only be the flesh of a powdered dragon? This were one of the grossest fooleries that could be, were there no other doctrine couched under this tradition, than what the bare letter affords; and who can possibly imagine the Jews to be a people so void of sense, as simply to believe this, without looking after any other meaning of the thing?" However, they must be very stupid that so did believe. Fagius¹⁶ directs to another sense of this fable; "By the Feast, (says he,) understand, that chief and everlasting happiness, which the righteous shall enjoy in the world to come; then truly they shall eat and devour that Leviathan, that is, Satan, when they shall see him with all his ministers, thrust into hell." And to this agrees the sense which Menasseh ben Israel¹⁷ gives of the same: "by these and the like, (says he,) are signified the spiritual delight, pleasure, and joy of souls, which they shall be possessed of in that state; for as here, wine usually delights and exhilarates the minds of men, so likewise that spiritual state shall fill the raised ones, with all joy everlasting; but of these allegories of the Rabbins, and of the Talmud, (adds he,) my purpose is to treat elsewhere and separately, in a singular tract;" but whether he ever published any thing of that kind, I do not know: and Mammonides¹⁸ some hundred years before him declared, that he should compose a treatise to explain every thing of this kind in the Talmud, and other writings; shewing, what were to be taken literally, and what

¹ R. Isaac Sangari in Sepher Cosri, par. 3. p. 253, 254. Maimon. in Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 11. sect. 1.

² De Arcan. Cath. ver. 1. 1. c. 7.

³ In Pirke Abot, c. 3. sect. 16.

⁴ In Atrio Ling. S. p. 89. apud Wagenseil. Prefat. ad Tela Ignea, p. 61.

⁵ Prolegomena de Success. ad Leg. Ebr.

⁶ Theriaca Judaica, p. 369, &c.

⁷ Prefat. ad Coccei Sanhedrin.

⁸ Prefat. ad Pirke Eliezer.

⁹ Unheard-of Curiosities, par. 1. c. 2.

¹⁰ Epist. Dedicat. ad Lex. Talmud.

¹¹ T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 12. 1. & Sanhedrin, fol. 38. 2.

¹² Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 28. 3.

¹³ See my Notes on the Targum on Cant. viii. 2.

¹⁴ Curiosities, ib. p. 41, 42.

¹⁵ In loco supra citato.

¹⁶ De Resurrectione Mortuorum, l. 2. c. 19. p. 225.

¹⁷ In Misn. Sanhedrin ut supra. Vid. Pocock. Porta. Mosis, p. 162.

parabolically ; but this work, I suppose, was never finished ; or however, never saw the light : and who also observes , that the readers of such writings may be divided into three classes ; the one sort consists of such, who understand all things in a literal sense, and believe them, though ever so absurd, irrational, and impossible ; which sect he represents as miserable and foolish, and to be pitied ; the other is, of such who also take things in the literal sense, but reproach the wise men, and laugh at them for them ; this class he makes to be more stupid than the former ; and the third sort is of them, and who are few, that consider the internal sense of things, and understand them in an enigmatical and parabolical way : and since therefore the Jews themselves, affirm, that these things which have the appearance of fable, are not to be understood in a literal but in an allegorical sense, it is an abuse of them, and doing them a real injury, to interpret them otherwise : and as it would not be advisable for any man to repeat one of Æsop's fables, unless he is master of the moral of it, that so he may instruct by it ; and especially to do it for sake of diversion and laughter, unless he has a child upon his knee to amuse ; so neither is it advisable to relate a Jewish fable, merely to laugh at it ; let such consider, at whose expense the laugh is ; it would be much more becoming them, to endeavour to search out the history, divinity, morality, or philosophy of them, if they can, of themselves ; or read those books directed to in the margin ^c, with others which are written for that purpose ; out of the last of which, the learned David Millius has produced an explication of two or three very remarkable fables in the Talmud ^d.

The Jewish writers are commonly set in a very odious light, as a parcel of ignorant and senseless men, as devoid of common judgment and understanding : it is certain ; their ancestors were not such ; they excelled all other people in wisdom and knowledge, as it is reasonable to conclude they should ; since they had a peculiar revelation from God, and were directed by him in things natural, civil, and religious ; and as they had the advantage above all mankind in the knowledge and worship of God, so in polity, morality, and natural philosophy ; all the wisdom of the Heathens was derived from them ; letters, history, arts and sciences, literal and mechanic, owe their rise or improvement to them. Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, borrowed their best things from them ; of which learned men may be convinced, by what Josephus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Justin Martyr, Eusebius Cæsariensis, and others, who were masters both of Hebrew and Heathen philosophy, have observed : and the English reader may be satisfied of the truth of this, by reading Gale's Court of the Gentiles : what men were there ever in any nation under the sun, to be compared with Abraham, Moses, Solomon, and Daniel ? And even after the Babylonish captivity, and when they were greatly sunk and degenerated, between that and the time of Christ, there were writers of considerable note among them, in divinity, morality, and history ; as the books of the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, the Maccabees shew ; which though *apocryphal*, and not of divine inspiration, have many things very valuable and useful in them, and are thought proper to be bound up with our Bibles, and read by the common people. Josephus and Philo the Jew, who wrote about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, are in great credit with learned men ; though the former has his mistakes, and many things of the mythic or fabulous kind ; and the other is a writer in the allegorical way ; it may be the reason why these are had in esteem, and not the Misnic and Talmudic writers is, because they wrote in Greek, and are more easily understood than the latter, whose language is difficult, and their style crabbed and rugged : and since I have mentioned these two writers, I cannot but declare my opinion, that such who make it their study to illustrate the New Testament with Greek authors, would do well to compare the Greek of these two writers, and also that of the Septuagint, with the New Testament ; since their writings were nearest the times of the New Testament writers, and they were Jews, as they were : but to proceed, though since the rejection of the Messiah and his Gospel, the Jews are given up to a judicial blindness, and hardness, yet it is only in those things which relate thereunto ; they are not deprived of their common sense and reason ; and many of them since, have been famous for their knowledge and learning, particularly in *physic* and *astronomy* ; and some of them have made a very great figure in the courts of princes, and have

^b Vid. Pocock Porta Mosis, p. 144—147.

^d Prefat. ad Catalecta Rabbinica.

^c Caphtor Uperah, Beer Haggolah, Derash Moseh, Leb haarjeh, Ammudeah Shibgnah, Ollelot Ephraim.

been made use of in forming and executing political schemes. Menasseh ben Israel, who lived in the last century, was a man of considerable reading and learning, and held a correspondence with many learned men among the Christians of his day; and by his writings appears to be well versed in divinity, and in ancient and modern philosophy: and though learning in all its parts, and even Talmudic learning itself, is now much neglected by that people, as one of their Rabbins here in London complained to me some years ago, yet do we find that they want capacity? that they are men void of common sense and understanding? Do we not find them acute enough in their trade and commerce among us? What reason is there for this general calumny? Are not they able to give an account of their own nation, their rites, customs, and usages?

But be they as fabulous and as foolish, as unfaithful and wicked, as they can be said, or thought to be, do they exceed the Heathen writers, poets, historians, and philosophers in such a character? who were not only all of them idolaters, but many of them very profane persons; whose writings are stuffed with lies, lewdness, and all manner of wickedness; yet many learned men have employed their time in the study of them, and have taken many things from them, for the illustration of the sacred text; and how have they rejoiced, as if they had found a great spoil, when they have lighted upon any thing, that has served to explain a word or phrase in the New Testament, or settle and establish the sense of one; or could observe any usage, rite, or ceremony among the Heathens, to which it has been thought there might be an allusion in it; though it has been, as Braunius observes*, in a Gentile Aristotle or Epicurus; in an impure Aristophanes, Martial, Lucian, Catullus, Petronius, those ministers of wickedness; or in a lying Homer, Hesiod, and Ovid, those makers of fables, and others of the same stamp: for my part, I do not object to such a method of illustrating Scripture; I am of opinion, that all kind of learning contributes to the knowledge of the Scripture, and all should be employed that way, and be subservient to it: Erasmus and Beza formerly, and of late Elsner, Bos, Wolfius, and Raphelius, have done much this way, to great profit and advantage. I don't dislike the illustration of the passage in Rev. ii. 17, concerning the white stone, and new name in it, by those lines of Ovid,

*Mos erat antiquis niveis atrisque lapillis
His damnare reos, illis absolvere culpa;*

Though they are taken out of the Fables of his Metamorphoses: all that I insist upon is, that Jewish writers should stand at least upon an equal foot with Heathen ones, in things relating to their own language, rites, and customs; and this is no unreasonable demand; and in it I have a very learned ancient writer on my side: "The things of the Hebrews are to be taken from themselves, and not elsewhere; as we learn the things of the Phœnicians from the Phœnicians; and the things of the Egyptians from the Egyptians; as also the things of the Grecians from those that are most famous among them; and the things of Philosophers from the Philosophers, and not from those who are unskilful in philosophy; so I reckon it must follow, (says he,) that the things of the Hebrews must be taken from their writings, and not elsewhere." And indeed it should seem as if these ought to have the preference to Heathen writers: since they profess the worship of the one true, and living God, believe a divine revelation, receive the books of the Old Testament, which many of their commentators have wrote, in many things, well upon: who when they write well, as it is confessed, none do better. And especially, they ought surely to be regarded and credited, when what they say agrees with the New Testament, and serves to illustrate and confirm it; of which kind are the things produced in the following Exposition.

These men are indeed enemies to the Gospel of Christ, but *fas est & ab hoste doceri*; and the concessions of an enemy may be made use of to great advantage against him, and for the confirmation of truth: besides, the people of the Jews are to be converted in the latter day, and it is worth our while to be at pains to convince them of their errors, to urge their ancient writings against them, and in favour of Christianity, to retort their own arguments upon them, to recommend the reading of the New Testament unto them, by shewing the agreement of its style with their writings, and by proving facts in it out of them, and so remove their prejudices against it; but if nothing of this kind can be hoped for from such a method of proceeding, surely it must be

* Selecta Sacra, l. 5. Exerc. 2. sect. 27. p. 611, 612.

† Euseb. Evangel. prepar. l. 7. c. 8. p. 306.

of use to us Christians. Is it of no moment and importance to the cause of Christianity, that the Jews themselves allow that there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, about the time he is said to live; that the names of his parents were Joseph and Mary; that he was born in Bethlehem of Judah; that he was for some time in Egypt; that he preached very much in Galilee; that he wrought miracles, cleansed lepers, &c. that he rode to Jerusalem on an ass, and was put to death by the Jews at the time of the passover? All which, with other things related by them, agree with the evangelic history, and confirm it: they own there was such a person as John the Baptist, who administered baptism in those times; they give us the names of several of the disciples of Christ, whom they allow to have had the gift of healing diseases. Is it of no use to us, nor any satisfaction to our minds, to observe from the Jews themselves, that there were such traditions among them the New Testament speaks of, and condemns? and that we are able, not only to shew in the gross that there were such things as the traditions of the elders, but that we can produce the particular ones our Lord mentions, and such customs and usages as are referred to by him and his apostles? Besides, are there not many, not only words and phrases, but things, which would have been morally impossible to understand in an ordinary way, without the assistance of Jewish learning? What could we have known of their synagogues, and synagogue-worship? of the several sects of religion among them? of their sanhedrim, and other courts of judicature? of their scourging with forty stripes, save one? of their phylacteries? of being uncircumcised after circumcision? of a sabbath-day's journey, with a multitude of other things, as will appear by the following exposition? Upon such considerations as these many great men have declared their sense of the great usefulness of Jewish writings for the understanding of the New Testament: and that it may appear I am not alone in my sentiments on this head, I shall produce the testimonies of several of them.

Our countryman Mr. Hugh Broughton, a man of great knowledge in the languages, and especially in the eastern languages, thus expresses himself: "The speech of the New Testament in every part, doth shew clearly that God is the author of it, insomuch that the Jews might know by the style that it came from heaven: in it we shall find the phrase, first, of the common Greek writers; secondly, of the *seventy-two* interpreters; thirdly, of the Talmudics; and fourthly, words made by the Apostles.—There is no other way to make Christians ready in the Bible, but by handling the Gospel by Talmudics, to whose tenour of study all the New Testament's style is bent.—The New Testament, speaking to Jews, is applied to their manner of speech, and plain, to a Talmudic, where it is hardest to us. The holy spirit useth the unlearned Jews—in Scribes learning, in writing for Scribes, to pass them in their Talmudical science; every part of the New Testament sheweth this to Talmudics; and Saint Paul, in school education, heard Gamaliel their doctor, and frameth all that Epistle which he wrote to them to meet with their Talmudics." And the Evangelist Matthew, he calls the Talmudic of Talmudists.

The learned Buxtorf^b says of the Talmud, that there are in it many things of great moment, to illustrate, in a very remarkable manner, an infinite number of places in the New Testament, as to words, phrases, and history.

Cocceius^a, speaking of the traditions of the Jews, has these words: "these are of use either to the fuller understanding of the law of Moses, as ritual, judicial, and moral; or for the illustration of foreign laws; or to give light into the histories of Jewish affairs; or which is greatest of all, for the confirmation of the evangelic history; where much mention is made of Jewish customs, laws, and traditions—the knowledge of the Talmud, and of Talmudic writings, affords very remarkable light for the illustration of the New Testament.—Seeing that language was in use in the age of Christ, and his apostles, which is with the Talmudists; and they spoke in no other, as is evident by clear arguments and testimonies of learned men: the comparing of that language with the phraseology of the New Testament, must needs contribute much for the illustration of it. Verily, if any one would but try to translate places into Hebrew, he will find that in many, Talmudic words and phrases are nearer than Bible ones."

^a Works, Tom. II. p. 416, 422, 693, 707.

^b Epist. Dedicat. ad Lex. Talmud.

^c Piefat. ad. Sanhedrin & Maccot.

Rhenferdius* begins a very learned dissertation of his after this manner: "Seeing all they deserve praise among Christians, who being furnished with various sorts of learning, employ their thoughts and cares for the illustration of the sacred Scripture, I know none that better deserve it than those, who being skilled in the Hebrew language and laws, from thence, as from its proper seat, borrow and hold forth light to the history and phraseology of the New Testament. Greece has much, Rome also, formerly mistress of the nations, has much; which being neglected, or not rightly enough understood, in vain you labour to understand the New Testament; yet as much as that is, which indeed is great, it is but as a drop from the ocean, in comparison of those things which the monuments of the Hebrews pour in for the same use, not by bushels, and measures of three bushels, but by whole barns full."

Muhlius¹, in an apology of his for the study of the *Talmud*, delivers himself in the following manner: "The Talmudic writings are of great moment for the understanding of the sacred Scripture; for in the versions of the holy Bible, how many faults and errors are there arising from ignorance of things in the Talmud? Such an ignorant interpreter easily slips, and also leads others by the same precipices. What will he do in the Old Testament, where all things are full of Talmudic argument? What in the New? where indeed the context is Greek, the words, I confess, are Greek, and the types are Greek, but the style is plainly Jewish, and full of Talmudic savour; so that the Talmudic volumes may seem like a verbal commentary upon the New Testament, which no one will deny but he that is determined to maintain an hypothesis." And after giving many instances in the New Testament, shewing and proving what he had asserted, he further adds; without the resolution and solid explanation of the Talmudists, these things would remain entirely inexplicable, and be only known to such who have learned them from the Misnic and Talmudic fountains: and hence it is, that the most learned men who know this full well have employed their chief studies this way, that from Talmudic and Rabbinical writings they might most happily illustrate the books of the New Testament; and then particularly mentions Drusius, Grotius, Capellus, Cartwright, and Lightfoot.

Surehusius^m relates, what by experience he had found to be true, how that in his younger days he applied himself to the reading of Greek authors for the better understanding of the New Testament; but did not receive that advantage from them he expected, the style and language not agreeing, by reason of the distance between the writers of the New Testament, and them: and he goes on to inform his readers, how when he came to engage in Hebrew studies, they not only led him in a right way to the understanding of the Old Testament, but beyond his expectation gave him no small light into the more difficult passages of the New Testament; and for which, when he rightly considered the thing, he found there was good reason, since the writers of it were Hebrews, who had had an Hebrew master, whose doctrine they had heard both in the ancient Hebrew language used in Bible exercitations among the doctors, and in the Syriac dialect, then common in conversation, and in sermons to the unlearned.

Wagenseilⁿ, I have before observed, affirms, that there is no book in the world, that can be of that service for the illustration of the holy Scriptures, as the *Talmud*; and adds, "that the institutions (or traditions) which are mentioned in the Talmud, did certainly of old obtain among the Jews, the authority of the New Testament openly convinces us; in which many of them are found, in the most express words; wherefore John Lightfoot, an Englishman, a man well versed in Hebrew literature, performed a laudable work, in explaining the four Evangelists; when out of the Talmud chiefly, he studied to bring light to the sacred writers, and to illustrate some of the more obscure sayings in them: that laborious work I highly value, for the whole is filled with deep learning, and furnishes out many things, of which no interpreter ever thought, nor could think of, without skill in the Talmud: would to God he had lived, to handle all the sacred books in the same manner; but seeing death has prevented it, it would be a desirable thing, if another, by the way shewed him, would endea-

* Dissert. 1. de decem otiosis Synagog. Thes. 1. p. 1, 2.

¹ Prefat. Apologet. pro studio Thalmudico ad Coccei Titul. Sanhedrin & Maccot.

^m Prefat. ad Misnam.

ⁿ Prefat. ad Tela Ignea, p. 65, 66.

“vour to go on with it to the end; who would certainly gain great favour and thanks, among all those who have a just value for such things.” More testimonies of this kind might have been produced, but these may suffice; nor should I have mentioned these, but to shew that I am not singular in my opinion and sentiments, concerning the manner of explaining passages in the New Testament, out of Jewish writings; and that this is not a rash start and sally of mine, which some, who are utter strangers to these things, might have imagined, but is what has been thought of, well weighed, considered, and approved of by men of the greatest figure, and with whom I am not to be named.

What some learned men on the other side of the question have affirmed, is monstrous and shocking, that whatever the Jews have delivered in their Misnah and Gemara, all the wisdom of the ancient Hebrews, the traditions of the elders, whatever they have in them concerning their antiquities, rites, and customs, especially those which give any light to the New Testament, are taken from the New Testament itself, from the sayings of Christ, and his apostles, from the fathers, and from Christian apostates; and that Christ, and his apostles, have no respect to the rites and customs of the Jews, in use before their time; and therefore nothing can be learned out of the Talmud to expound places in the New Testament. Braunius^p has given a full answer to all this with a great deal of spirit and just reasoning. I fret at my heart, says he, to see men, meaning particularly Vossius and Owen, otherwise well versed in Greek and Latin authors, teach things so absurd and manifestly false, with so much boldness; and they must pardon me, if I say with so much ignorance, for I say the truth: whoever has but just dipped into the Misnah and Gemara, and other ancient books, will at once observe, that they that assert such things, are most ignorant of Jewish antiquity, and have never read the above writings; and have only took some things, and these often both bad and false, out of the observations of others. He rightly takes notice of the Jews’ implacable hatred of Christ, his apostles, and the fathers of the Christian church, who had their writings in the utmost abhorrence and detestation, and would never borrow any thing from them. He observes, that this is as ridiculous as to suggest, that the Greek and Roman writers took out of the New Testament what they say concerning Cæsar Augustus, Cyrenius, Pontius Pilate, and other things which relate to the Roman history; that it is equally as great a piece of madness to imagine that the Jews took what they have written concerning the rites and customs of their own nation, out of the New Testament, as it would be to suppose that the Heathen writers have taken from thence what they say concerning the Olympic games, and other customs alluded to by the apostles. He exposes, in a very just manner, the folly of such an assertion, by observing that the Jews, according to it, would have known nothing of synagogues in Judea; nor ever thought of phylacteries, and the enlarging the borders of their garments; of paying tithes of mint, anise, cummin, and other herbs; of a sabbath-day’s journey; of drawing on the fore-skin after circumcision; and of the law of scourging with forty stripes, save one; nor perhaps would they have sworn by heaven and earth, by Jerusalem, by the temple, and by their head, or have made use of pipers and mourners at funerals, or forbid the plucking ears of corn on the sabbath-day, except they had met with these things in our New Testament; all which would be monstrously ridiculous to suppose; and yet no more so than what these writers suggest.

Some may think I have made too much use of Jewish authorities in the following Exposition; my concern is, that I have made no more use of them; and that my reading and observations have not furnished me with more materials of this kind, which I am very well satisfied might be obtained from them; for which reason I should have chosen to have deferred the publication of it, hoping I might be able, by such means, to give further light to some passages of Scripture; and only the importunity of my friends, and the consideration of the uncertainty of life, have prevailed upon me to let it go into the world as it is. I have used all diligence, both from my own reading, and from the observations of others, to make it as perfect in this way as I could; and from none have I had so much help and assistance as from the great Dr. Lightfoot, who has broke the ice for me, and pointed out the way in which I should proceed, as Wagenseil observes. On consulting my *Adversaria*, and comparing my notes with what the

^p Selecta sacra, l. 5. Exercitat. 2. p. 617. 621—629.

doctor has observed, I found some things taken notice of which he has published; and indeed, it can hardly be thought it should be otherwise in reading the same writings, and with the same view; but I have not thought proper to drop them on that account, but have rather chose to make use of others produced by him, unobserved by me, in order to make this work as complete as I could, and which lovers of Hebrew learning will thank me for; though the reader will not be able to observe scarce any thing but what is either corrected, improved, or confirmed. And as for those who may not have a taste for these things, I hope they will find without them a satisfactory exposition of the sacred text; and I may further observe, that citations of this sort will not appear so frequently and largely in the other parts of the work, as in the first volume. It is very possible, that my fondness for this kind of literature may have betrayed me into some weaknesses, which I hope will be overlooked. And no doubt but there are mistakes made by me in this sort of learning itself, which men of candour and ingenuity, especially such who know the difficulty and intricacy of such studies, will not bear hard upon me for, but gently correct. Some of my readers may be offended with some things they may meet within the citations out of Jewish writings, not being used to such reading; and this is an infelicity that attends testimonies produced out of both Heathenish and Jewish authors, that there is often something not pleasing and grateful to Christian ears; I have, as much as I could, pared off what might not be so agreeable; but sometimes it has been necessary to recite more than is eligible, in order to finish the sentence, and complete the sense; and the reader should observe, that he is no further to regard the citation, than as it concerns that for which it is made, the phraseology, history, rite, or custom referred unto.

As for the Oriental versions I have chiefly made use of in this work, they are those that are published in the London Polyglott Bible; and I have, for the most part, followed the translations of them in it, choosing rather that my readers should trust to the labours of those learned men concerned in that work, than to that little knowledge and skill I have in those languages. The various readings of the text I have not entered into a critical examination of; I have only selected some of the most material ones, which differ most from the commonly received reading, or agree with the Vulgate Latin and eastern versions, or furnish out an useful observation. Nor need the reader be uneasy, lest the authority of the Scripture should be weakened, and become doubtful by these different readings: for as a learned man of our own nation has observed¹, “it is an invincible reason for the Scriptures’ part, that other escapes should be so purposely and infinitely let pass, and yet no saving or substantial part at all scarce moved out of its place. To say the truth, these varieties of readings in a few bye-places do the same office to the main Scripture, as the variations of the compass to the whole magnet of the earth; the mariner knows so much the better for these how to steer his course.”

I have nothing more to observe, only that I have here and there taken notice of the more material objections of the Jews to the writings of the New Testament, and have given a short answer to them; and the rather, as they may partly serve to remove their prejudices against them, and partly to confirm Christians in them; so likewise to obviate the exceptions of deists, who join with them in them, and make use of the same, and improve them to the same purpose.


As to my religious principles from which I am denominated by men, they are pretty much known in the world by the writings I have already published, and my notes on the several parts of scripture will be found to correspond with them. I have studied consistency with truth, and with myself; and I hope nothing will appear contradictory to the form of sound words, and the analogy of faith, or be yea and nay, but harmonious, uniform, and all of a piece.

And now I do, in the most sincere and grateful manner, give thanks to God for that measure of health and strength of body; and for all the gifts and graces of his spirit afforded me, by which I have been enabled to go through this arduous work thus far, and would be depending upon him for fresh supplies of grace and strength for the publication of the whole. I most freely acknowledge, that all I have of nature, literature, and grace, I have from him, from whom every good and perfect gift comes; I have nothing but what I have received: nor would I glory as though

¹ J. Gregory’s Preface to his Works.

THE PREFACE.

I had received it not: and if I have wrote any thing contrary to the divine perfections, or what may reflect any dishonour on the dear name of Jesus, or be any way injurious to the truth, as it is in him, or be detrimental to the interest of pure and undefiled religion, I do most humbly entreat forgiveness at the hands of God; I am sure I have not wrote any thing of this kind knowingly, and on purpose. To conclude, I do most earnestly desire and implore the blessing of God upon these labours of mine, that they might be useful to many in reading them, that their minds may be enlightened, their faith may be established, their knowledge of divine things may be increased, and God may be glorified.



The Philadelphia Baptist Association, in its official minutes, of October, 1807, recommended
“that each member church of the Association subscribe for a copy of Dr. Gill’s incomparable Exposition of the Old and New Testaments for the use of their ministers, and urge all sister associations to aid in the accomplishment of this desirable object.”

A.D. Gillette,
The Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association
1707-1807, p. 439

The Charleston Baptist Association
“recommended to the churches and the public to encourage, by subscription, the undertaking...to republish Dr. Gill’s Exposition and each church was advised to provide a copy for the use of its minister”

David Benedict
A General History of the Baptist Denomination,
Vol. 2, p. 149

The Baptist Standard Bearer, Incorporated
is a republication society organized in 1984,
and is recognized as a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization. It was founded for the primary purpose of republication and preservation of materials reflecting the Baptist heritage. It is not affiliated with, or financially supported by any association, convention or particular denomination. It is financed by individual donations, foundation grants, bequeathed inheritances, but primarily by the sale of its own publications.

ISBN 978-1-57978-482-9



9 781579 784829