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Author: Francis Cunningham

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HULSEAN ESSAY
For 1811.

**A
DISSERTATION
ON THE
BOOKS *of* ORIGEN *against* CELSUS,
WITH A VIEW
TO ILLUSTRATE THE ARGUMENT
AND
POINT OUT THE EVIDENCE THEY AFFORD
TO THE
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.**

Published in pursuance of the Will of the Rev. J. HULSE, as having gained the ANNUAL PRIZE, instituted by him in the University of Cambridge.

BY
FRANCIS CUNNINGHAM,
OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE.

"Quippe in his (*nimirum Origenis contra Celsum libris*) communem Christianorum doctrinam, adversus instructissimum Religionis nostræ hostem propugnat: hi summo Auctoris studio maxima eruditione, elucubrati fuere." *Bull. Def. Fid. Nic.* Cap. ix. Sec. 2.

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1812.

TO THE
Very Rev. the DEAN of CARLISLE,
 PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS,
 THE PRESIDENT,
 AND
To the Reverend and Learned
 THE FELLOWS
 OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE,
 THIS ESSAY
 IS DEDICATED
 AS A TRIBUTE OF RESPECT AND GRATITUDE BY
 THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

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THE Book of Celsus, ^[1a] entitled "The True Discourse," ^[1b] is supposed to have been written during the fifth persecution, ^[1c] in the reign of Marcus Antoninus, and in the one hundred and seventieth year of the Christian era. Of his history nothing is known, but that he was an epicurean philosopher, ^[1d] and a friend of Lucian, who inscribed a book ^[1e] to him. The object of his work was an attack upon Christianity, and as such, it is one of the most malignant and unreserved upon record. He is indebted to his opponents for bringing down any account of his writings to posterity, for they have otherwise perished.

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Origen died in the year of our Lord ^[2a] two hundred and fifty-four. He undertook, at the request of Ambrose, ^[2b] to answer the work of Celsus, and "to leave no part without examination." His Treatise is divided into eight books; but this division seems rather to be founded upon caprice, ^[2c] than upon any design of methodically discussing the argument. The reasonings of Celsus are discussed in the order in which they occur, which is without method, or connection. The extracts which are made by Origen from the works of his adversary are very copious, so much so, that, considering his object, of fully discussing every part of the original work, it is probable nothing of importance is omitted. The accuracy of the quotations of Origen is guaranteed both by his acknowledged veracity, ^[3a] and by the risk of refutation to which he would otherwise have exposed himself, from opponents who had the original writing in their hands. The work of Origen has been considered both by ancients and moderns, as a master-piece of eloquence and

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argument. Eusebius ^[3b] and Jerome ^[3c] have given it their highest approbation. Many of our own writers, ^[3d] and many more of the French, ^[3e] both Catholic and Protestant, have pronounced it to be the completest, and best written apology for the Christian Religion which has been bequeathed to us by the ancients.

The want of order, both in the attack of Celsus, and the reply of Origen, renders it impracticable to follow, precisely in their steps. Time will be gained, and perspicuity promoted, by endeavouring to bring their perplexed argument into a more regular form. We shall therefore single out the main topics discussed by each, and by stating the objections of the one, and the replies of the other, strive to collect the evidence which each furnishes to the truth of Christianity. Taking the more prominent topics therefore, we shall consider in order; the History and Writings of the Jews—the Scriptures—the History of Christ—the Conduct and the Principles of the early Christians. After which it will be useful to sum up the evidence to Christianity, supplied by the whole argument.

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CHAP. I. HISTORY *and* WRITINGS *of the* JEWS.

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THE evidence in favour of Christianity, to be deduced from the history and writings of the Jews, is so important, that it was a primary object with Celsus, to render it nugatory. This he endeavours to effect, first, by disputing the antiquity of Moses; and secondly, by condemning his narration. We shall examine his statement on these points, and some important acknowledgments he makes, of the existence of the prophetic writings.

He says that “the Jews, ^[5a] who were originally fugitive slaves from Egypt, pretended, on the authority of the Books of Moses, to a very ancient genealogy; ^[5b] that they lived together in a corner of Palestine, in profound ignorance; ^[5c] not having heard of the things long before celebrated by Hesiod, and many other men divinely inspired.” He then particularizes much of the history of Genesis, which he calls “an old woman’s story, full of impiety;” ^[6a] and asserts that “many of its facts are taken from the heathens.” To this Origen ^[6b] replies by referring to Josephus ^[6c] and Tatian ^[6d] for external proof of the history of the Jews: He affirms that they have all the evidence of their existence which other nations have, ^[6e] that they have records which others have not; ^[6f] that other nations are allowed to have existed who bear testimony to the Jews; ^[6g] that it would have been impossible for so small a band, to have opposed itself to the whole power of Egypt; that it must have changed its language; and that, in changing, it has not assumed one resembling the neighbouring nations. He then urges the wisdom of the Jewish Institutions; infers from their perfect preservation, the esteem in which they were held; and challenges a comparison, ^[7a] as to sublimity of doctrine, and purity of morals, with any other system, proposed to mankind.

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Celsus then notices many of the Old Testament characters: He ridicules the relation of “the Fall, ^[7b] the Deluge, Children born of old Persons, Brothers who kill each other, Mothers who deceive, the Sin of Lot, the Animosity of Esau, the Deceit of the Sons of Jacob, the History of Joseph,” &c. Origen replies that such facts alone are selected by Celsus from the writings of Moses, as supply a ground of attack; that the simplicity of his narration proves the integrity of its author; and he then apologizes for these causes of offence by the necessity of the case, he contrasts with them the greater profligacy of the heathen, or fancifully explains them upon the scheme of allegory.

No direct admission of Celsus, relating to Jewish prophecy, is to be found. There are however many observations, which prove the coming of Christ to have been expected by the Jews, and this expectation must have been the result of prophecy. The remarks of Celsus, with regard to this topic, are of this kind. That the “Jews ^[8a] and Christians believe, that the Spirit of God had promised there would come a Saviour; but they could not agree, whether or no, he had already come;” ^[8b] that “the prophecies which the Christians apply to Christ refer equally to other persons;” ^[8c] that “others had lived who had applied the prophecies of Christ to themselves,” &c. &c. Thus he plainly admits prophecies to have existed of some great person, who was to come; and that Jews and Christians believed in them, but that it was uncertain whether they were accomplished.

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The inferences to be collected from the preceding observations, are as follows.

First, The Jewish Scriptures are of older date, than the birth of Christ. For if these writings had been compiled since that time, some rumours of such an event must have reached Celsus; and this fact which would have ruined all the pretensions of Jewish antiquity, would have been urged by the heathens as a primary objection to their claims. The Jews themselves moreover could not have been deceived, if this had been a cunningly devised fable; for they were a widely extended people, and in so short a space of time, it would have been impossible to make them the dupes of such an imposture. Secondly, It may be inferred from the admission of Celsus, that the prophecies were found in the Jewish Scriptures *in his time*; and *since* then no alteration has been made in them by the Jews. But if so, this is the strongest presumption, that the Jews had never altered them *before*. For, if, when by the fulfilment of the prophecies, in the person of Christ, they were most tempted to erase predictions, so hostile to their own creed, they made no change, much less, would they do it, when the temptation was diminished. Thirdly, If little is to be

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collected from the writings of Celsus, in favour of those prophecies which he has attacked, something may be inferred in favour of those which he has failed to attack. Their existence is admitted, and his spirit of hostility is such, that we must attribute his silence not to his forbearance, but to his disingenuousness. Fourthly, The admission that some important character was expected, not only by the Jews, but by the heathens, at the era of Christ's advent, is very important to religion. Where could the expectation originate, except in the Jewish Scriptures? The sages, poets, and historians of antiquity, appear to have drunk at this sacred source. The Arabians ^[10a] came from a far country to greet it; Herod destroyed ^[10b] the Jewish genealogies that the family of David might not be known, ^[10c] undertook the building of the temple, a work it was thought the Messiah was to perform, and murdered ^[11a] his own son in fear that the promised King should dethrone him. Virgil, building upon the popular persuasion, applied it on two occasions to Augustus. ^[11b] This expectation is also mentioned by Cicero, ^[11c] Sallust, ^[11d] Suetonius, ^[11e] and Tacitus. ^[11f] If the origin of this expectation was with the Jews, where else can we look for the accomplishment. Who has fulfilled their wide-spread expectations? Where is this hope of all nations to be sought, if not in the person of Christ?

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CHAP. II. THE SCRIPTURES.

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CELSUS in his general mode of argument against the Christians, renders a very important testimony to the truth of their Scriptures: for his charges are not grounded on facts or doctrines, not there recorded; but almost every one of them may be directly traced, to some important and obvious passage of the Bible.

He seemed therefore to consider, that he could most effectually destroy Christianity, by overturning the authority of the writings which the Christians believed to have been delivered to them by inspiration, and which they considered the authority, the guide and the security of their religion.

He acknowledges ^[13a] that there were "writings concerning the affairs of Christ made by his disciples;" using the word *disciple* distinctly from the *follower* of Christ, and plainly in the sense of the immediate attendant upon his person. Whence may be inferred the general belief, in his time, that the Gospels proceeded from their accredited authors.

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He states the Christians to have "preached their doctrines to the poor and wicked, without partiality or respect of persons;" ^[13b] a statement admitted by Origen, to be conformable to the genius of the Gospel, and fulfilling its own declarations, "that to the poor the Gospel is preached;" ^[13c] and that "Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." ^[13d] This statement also proves the Gospel to have been publicly promulged.

He charges the Christians with so "mutilating the Scriptures, that if one expression was attacked they might take refuge in another;" ^[14a] but the charge rests alone upon his assertion. Origen confidently challenges any proof of it; imputes the mutilations of Scripture, exclusively, to Marcion and Valentinus; but denies their claim to the title of Christians.

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The quotations of Celsus from the New Testament are so numerous, ^[14b] that from them a great part of the History of Christ, a statement of his doctrines, his character, and that of his disciples, might be gathered. These quotations are taken from the Gospels, in general, but more particularly from Saint Matthew, from the Acts of the Apostles, from the various Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John. They are so faithful a transcript of our New Testament, as to leave no doubt, that he had it before him. Now and then, however, he mutilates passages, as if to show the contempt in which he held the whole relation. Thus in mentioning the disciples of Christ, he says, "that he took ten or eleven abjects, vile publicans and sailors." ^[15] This error is plainly one, rather of contempt, than of ignorance.

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It is also worthy of notice, that Celsus has taken very few stories from the heretical writings, which assumed to themselves equal authority with the Gospels, and which abounded in his days. These stories, wherever they occur, are disallowed by Origen, and their authors, at once, given up as uninspired. The concessions of Celsus may be taken in evidence, that the canon of Scripture was already so well established, that it would have been in vain for him to mis-state it.

The general testimony furnished by Origen to the Scriptures, may be viewed in some degree distinctly from that of Celsus. It must be considered as coming about fifty years after. ^[16a] In this work he quotes from twenty-nine books of the Old Testament, ^[16b] from all but three in the New, ^[16c] and from five books of the Apocrypha. ^[16d] His quotations agree very accurately with our Text, and many passages, which since have been disputed, ^[16e] are held by him as authentic. He allows no objection to lie against the plenary inspiration of Scripture; he indeed admits ^[16f] some differences to have existed, as to the interpretation of passages, but adverts to none respecting their authority.

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Origen frankly avows the *difficulties* of Scripture; and it is to cut his way through these, that he is tempted to employ the weapon of allegorical interpretation; a weapon, which never fails to wound the hand of the employer, and to injure the cause it is designed to serve. His rashness in

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this method of interpretation may be estimated by the following specimen. ^[17a] "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, who taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." ^[17b] "The little ones, the children of Babylon," he says, "are to be interpreted vexatious thoughts, the offspring of confusion, which vice has produced; and he who is happy in dashing them against the stones, is he, who crushes these thoughts against the solidity of reason." Such excesses, whilst they betray the unsoundness of an expositor of Scripture, evince his faith in its authority: and it is rather the authority of the text, than the universal sobriety of its interpreters, which we are anxious to defend.

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CHAP. III. HISTORY OF CHRIST.

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THE attack of Celsus, upon the History of Christ, maybe arranged under the three divisions, of his birth; his life; his death.

In adverting to the birth of Christ, Celsus introduces a Jew, charging Christ with being privately born ^[19a] in a little village of Judea, his mother being driven out by the Carpenter, to whom she was betrothed, because convicted of adultery ^[19b] with a soldier named Panther. He imputes to him that he was privately educated, and went to earn his livelihood in Egypt.

It is enough to say of all this, that it is mere assertion; that no proof of it is either established or offered. Origen, however, justly asks, if it be probable, that a person, the purity of whose life and doctrine is so remarkably opposite to the imputation laid against his birth, ^[20a] should have been born and educated by a profligate parent. Perhaps, even the idolatrous worship of the Virgin Mary, in the Church of Rome, of which the first elements are discernible at a very early period, may in a measure serve, (the only good purpose it ever served) to vindicate her moral character.

^[20b]

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Against the Life of Christ, no charge is brought by Celsus; ^[20c] except that he did not answer to *his* conception ^[20d] of the appearance of a Deity on earth. It is obvious that this objection is founded on a misconception of the object of his advent. Celsus believed that other gods had descended ^[20e] from heaven to earth, and framed his notion of the appearance of deity, upon the model with which the fictions of heathen poetry and history supplied him. To satisfy his perverted imagination, ^[21a] God must descend in showers of gold, ^[21b] or armed with celestial thunders. And indeed had Jesus Christ appeared, like the gods of heathenism, to gratify lust, or decide the fate of empires; the ensigns of pomp and power would have been adapted to his commission. But when it is remembered, that he came to establish a spiritual religion, ^[21c] to wean men from the world, ^[21d] to live with the poor, ^[21e] and above all to die for the guilty; ^[21f] then it is evident, that the character which became him, was that of a "Man of Sorrows." ^[21g] Moral grandeur was the only grandeur with which he could invest himself, righteousness his sceptre, ^[21h] and his throne a cross. Had Celsus indeed been disposed to examine, or enabled to appreciate, the moral dignity of his character, he would have shrunk with disgust from the fabled descents of Jupiter. He would have seen that this Pillar of Cloud ^[22a] had a bright side; that if he was a man in suffering, in the grandeur with which he suffered he was truly God.

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Celsus states, even to minuteness, the facts recorded by the Sacred Historians, as to the Death of Christ. He says, that he was "betrayed," ^[22b] "bound," "scourged," "stretched upon the Cross;" ^[22c] that he "drank vinegar;" ^[22d] that after his death, he was "said to have appeared twice," ^[22e] but that "he did not appear to his enemies." ^[22f] To the objection conveyed in the last clause it is an obvious reply, that his appearance to his enemies cannot be claimed, except by those who contend that God is bound to increase evidence to the persons who shut their eyes against it. Those who, after the evidence of the miracles of Jesus Christ, could continue to doubt, would not have believed, though he "had risen from the dead" ^[23] in their view.

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The objections of Celsus to the character of Christ being thus dismissed, and they are really unworthy even of the scanty space here bestowed upon them, it is plain that all the *facts* admitted by him are so much to be added to the scale of evidence. It is thus proved, that, either influenced by universal persuasion, or borne down by overwhelming testimony, men, who desired to be infidels, were compelled to admit the facts of Christianity. It is also proved, that nothing can be charged against the life of Christ, except that he most accurately maintained the character in which he condescended to appear.

CHAP. IV. MIRACLES.

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THE strongest evidence in favour of Christianity is supplied by the Miracles, which accompanied its promulgation. We shall proceed to consider the light cast by the work before us, on this

important topic; and examine, first, the testimony of Origen and Celsus to the miraculous effects that were produced; secondly, the pretensions which these works had to a Divine original.

Celsus lived in an age when by the testimony of all history, the Miracles of Christ were objects of notoriety. The disciples had yet the power of working them, ^[24a] and they propounded ^[24b] them as the incontrovertible proof of the truth of their religion. It was impossible therefore, in a general work against Christianity, that Celsus should not refer to the subject of Miracles, or that he should, in the face of their public performance, flatly deny their existence. He has then taken the only method by which he could obviate this difficulty. He makes a "*supposition*" ^[25a] that Christ did perform many marvellous works;" these however he imputes to "the same magical power that is made use of in the market-places of Egypt." We shall first examine how far this concession on the part of Celsus may stand as an admission that Miracles were really performed. Writers have differed about the meaning to be attached to these words; but the greater part of those, whose opinion is of highest authority, ^[25b] have considered them as an acknowledgment that these wonderful works could not be denied by him. Considering the peculiarly difficult circumstances in which Celsus was placed, he could, by a supposition of this kind alone, escape from the dilemma; and as he did not dare on such a subject to assert a falsehood, he endeavoured at least to excite a doubt. This opinion is moreover strengthened by the line of argument he pursues, "that if the by-standers had really thought these works to be Miracles, they could not but have believed;" then he proceeds to undervalue the worth of these performances, by comparing them with those of Æsculapius. ^[26a]

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After reading the passage, in which our Lord foretells that "many should come in his name, doing many wondrous things;" ^[26b] he exclaims, "how great is the force of truth!—Christ carries with him his own refutation, for he acknowledges a certain Satan, should work the same miracles that he did." Of this objection it may be observed, that it cuts two ways. If it invalidates the Miracles of Christ, yet the event corresponding with the prediction establishes his prophetic character, and thus authenticates his religion.

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Origen continually proclaims, ^[27a] in bold and eloquent language, in the name of himself, and his fellow Christians, their faith in Christianity to be founded upon miracles, wrought in the name of Christ; of which ^[27b] they themselves had been eye-witnesses.

It may be asked whether modern infidels who have ventured to contradict the Miracles of Christ, a weapon Celsus was afraid to take up, have estimated the rashness of their enterprize. Are they competent to deny what a spectator no less malevolent than themselves was compelled to admit. Has the lapse of eighteen hundred years enabled them to ascertain a fact of daily occurrence with more accuracy than a by-stander? Are objects best seen at the greatest distance?

Having then stated the admission of the occurrence of certain supernatural events, both by the friend, and enemy of Christianity; we shall say a few words upon the *source*, to which they are ascribed by Celsus.

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Origen, in considering this topic, admits ^[28a] the faculty of healing to be not necessarily divine; but says, that the nature of the power by which wonders of this kind were performed, must be ascertained, first, by the character of the agent, and secondly, by the nature of the fact. He then shews that the Miracles of Christ ^[28b] were not wrought like those of the Egyptians, for vain exhibition; that their object was to heal disease, or to assuage grief; and that those miracles, more peculiarly characteristic of their ministry, namely, the conversion of the heart from sin to God, ^[28c] were such as the magicians neither felt the disposition nor professed the power to perform.

The question however may be differently argued. All miracles, and therefore those of Egypt, must be allowed to originate in the permission of God. For as the strongest proof of the existence of the Deity is the creation and regular course of nature, so, that this proof may remain, the suspension of the power of nature must also be attributed to him. There is the same proof, that miracles were performed by the power of God, as that the world was made, and is regulated by him.

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If, however, it is admitted, that the Divine Being has, under certain circumstances, permitted the influence of Satanic agency: it will still be evident that the miracles of Christianity were not works of this class. To suppose that they were, would involve a variety of conclusions, unsupported by reason or analogy.

For, if they were, then God, contrary to the whole course of his dispensations, has suffered his laws to be suspended, in order to betray millions of his creatures, for a succession of ages, into a false theology.—If they were; then, contrary also to all precedent, he has suffered the interpositions of devils to outstrip his own. Even the magicians of Egypt, ^[30a] were compelled to recognise the supremacy of God.—If they were; then, contrary to all experience, a large body of men, through a long period of time, have been found willing to incur reproach, ^[30b] to endure pain, and even to suffer death, in the support of miracles which they knew to be the grossest frauds.—If they were; then the kingdom of Satan ^[30c] must, in the most signal manner, have been "divided against itself;" since, upon this hypothesis, miracles which were wrought by devils, were employed to dispossess them, and finally accomplished the subversion of the Pagan Mythology, the most formidable system of machinery, by which Satan ever perpetrated his designs upon mankind.

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The evidence then furnished by this Work, on the subject of Miracles, is considerable. Celsus

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admits their existence; Origen appeals to them, as what he, and many others had seen. There is indeed incontrovertible evidence for their existence, till the conversion of the Roman Empire invested Christianity with temporal power, and raised her to universal dominion. With the necessity, the possession of the miraculous powers ceased. From this period the Gospel was left to the ordinary grace of God, to its own resources, and to the human powers of its followers. When a body of illiterate fishermen were commissioned to publish it to all nations, then God supplied the powers by which all men "heard them speak in their own language."^[31] Now that learning and wealth are the handmaids of religion, they are left in a great measure to do the work of miracles. All our faculties should be therefore bent to this sacred cause, and all our spoils be offered at the foot of the cross. Nor is the evidence furnished even now to Christianity through the channel of miracles by any means small. Although miracles of one class have ceased, men may see in the true Christian, the greatest of all miracles; a man by nature, cold, corrupt, indolent, selfish, transformed under the creative hand of the Gospel, into the bold, generous, active, disinterested, enterprising, apostle of truth. p. 32

CHAP. V. CHARACTER *of the* EARLY CHRISTIANS.

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ALTHOUGH the character of an individual, professing a particular faith, is not sufficient of itself either to establish, or condemn his creed, the character of a whole body, professedly living under the influence of the same principles, bears the most convincing testimony, either for, or against them. Accordingly the mixed indolence, sensuality, and ferocity of the Mahometan character, have always been deemed a sufficient objection, to the principles of the Koran. And the ancient Christian writers tell us, that the arm of their tormentors, was sometimes suspended, by the purity of the Christian victim: and that they heard with astonishment men supplicating blessings on the heads of their persecutors. Now it may be of importance to enquire, what testimony is supplied by the work of Origen, to the character of the early Christians, and, through them, to religion itself. p. 34

Celsus objects to the Christians, that they invited every person,^[34a] however ignorant, or simple, or wretched, or wicked, to their mysteries; and thereby made such a society, as was fit only for a company of thieves.

To this Origen replies by admitting their willingness to receive every body into their society. He glories in their desire, to give knowledge to the ignorant, wisdom to the simple, peace to the wretched, and reformation to the wicked. He says that "all are cordially received; and food administered, according to their different wants." But he adds, that, as the great object of Christianity was conversion from sin,^[34b] so, before any were allowed to partake of the mysteries of religion, they were subjected to considerable trial; that the very acceptance of Christianity implied a conversion from these sins, and that if the converts of the Christians^[35a] were examined, they would be found far better than the rest of men. p. 35

Some of the other objections serve, in a striking manner, to shew the superiority both of Christianity and its followers, to the prevailing system and current characters of the day. "Now a days,"^[35b] says he, "you die with Christ;" you teach^[35c] such precepts as "resist not injuries." This charge Origen is naturally unwilling to refute. He admits that such is the genius of his religion, that many Christians devote themselves to perpetual celibacy; "We renounce luxury^[35d] to devote ourselves to God; we expose our body^[35e] to all manner of sufferings; and are strangled like sheep without daring to resist."

In order to repel some charges of Celsus, against the Christians, as subjects, and citizens, Origen appeals to the evidence of facts; institutes a comparison between the Christians and the heathens,^[36a] under the same government, at Athens, Corinth, and other cities. "Their religion," says he, "teaches, that union with God, and each other, is supreme happiness." p. 36

Celsus charges them with holding secret assemblies.^[36b] His opponent, whilst he invites enquiry into the nature and conduct of these meetings, asks if their actual circumstances did not debar them from meeting in any other manner.

He objects to them also, that they have no temples of worship;^[36c] but is at once refuted, by a statement of the impossibility of erecting them. The error also is stated, of imagining that God can dwell in temples made with hands; and the sublime article^[37a] of our creed avowed, that the "heaven of heavens cannot contain him!"^[37b] p. 37

While therefore, the paucity and weakness of the charges alleged by the enemies of Christianity, against its followers, is established by this work, much is incidentally advanced, which substantiates the superiority of the character of Christians. They had indeed degenerated even in the days of Celsus. The stream had not flowed even thus far, without being tinged with many impurities. But enough virtue was left to vindicate the religion; enough to enable her champions to demonstrate the superior efficacy of the faith, because it made the best citizens and the most useful men.

The allegations of Celsus, and the defence of Origen, alike prove the extent of the sufferings to p. 38

which the Christians were subjected. And it may be truly said, that the best defence of Christianity is written with the blood of its persecuted followers. It is not credible, that those should either be deceived, or conspire to deceive others, whose lives were almost necessarily to pay the forfeit of their mistake, or of their stratagem.

CHAP. VI. DOCTRINES *of the* EARLY CHRISTIANS.

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It would be a material defect in an Essay purporting to state the contents of the reply of Origen to Celsus, and the evidence supplied by it in favour of Christianity, not to notice the doctrines of the early Christians, as they may be collected from the work before us.

In the first place then it appears, both from the objections of the one, and the direct assertion of the other, that the Christians of that age admitted in the fullest sense the Divinity of Christ. "Let them," says Celsus, "account him an angel, but is he the first and only one that is come?"^[39] Hence it is plain, that however Celsus might confound angels and Christ, the Christians did not.

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The assertions of Origen however are unequivocal, and decisive. Three distinct propositions form a prominent part^[40a] in his writings. First, That Christ was (ἀγένετος) uncreated. Secondly, That the Maker of the World is to be worshipped. Thirdly, That Christ is the Maker of the World. As to the first point it is sufficient to refer to a passage where Jesus Christ is expressly called the "uncreated Son of God."^[40b] He preserves a precise distinction between creatures, (δημιουργημάτα) and their Creator; and he brings^[40c] them together into comparison as to the respect that is due to them. In the next place he says that we ought to worship^[40d] no creatures (δημιουργημάτα), but the Creator;^[40e] that we can only lift up our eyes^[40f] to the Creator of all the magnificence of Nature, to see whom we ought to admire, serve, and adore. Then he proclaims Jesus Christ^[41a] as the Creator of the Universe; that God working with him said at the creation, "Let there be Light, let us make Man."^[41b] But Origen is yet more distinct in the statement of his opinions. He says that the Father is indeed eminently God;^[41c] but that the worship of the Son^[41d] is not an inferior but a Divine worship; he applies the same expression to the adoration of Jesus Christ^[41e] by the Magi that he does to the worship of God; he speaks of the Father^[41f] and the Son being jointly worshipped as one God; he admits^[41g] the worship of the Son in his distinct individual character; he attributes to him immutability,^[41h] omnipresence,^[41i] and other qualities^[41j] which are characteristic only of the Most High.^[41k]

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The personality of the Holy Ghost is distinctly admitted by Origen;^[42] and his descent upon earth at the day of Pentecost. He also frequently asserts, that miracles were performed upon earth by the agency^[43a] of the Holy Spirit.

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To the doctrine of the Atonement continual references are made.

The recognition is not less distinct, both by Celsus, and Origen, of the doctrine of Justification by Faith, as the opinion of the early Christians. "You tell sinners," says Celsus, "not to examine, but believe; and their faith will save them."^[43b] This is precisely the language in which an uncandid opponent might be expected to state that doctrine. A more patient examination of the system would have taught him, that "examine yourselves,"^[43c] and "search the Scriptures,"^[43d] were lessons taught by the same Master who insisted upon the efficacy of a true and living faith.

There are two doctrines, original sin, and the eternity of punishment, as to one of which the language of Origen is contradictory, and as to the other it is heterodox.

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On the doctrine of original sin, he asserts, in one place, "that no soul came vicious from the hands of God,^[44a] but that many persons so corrupt themselves by bad education, or example, or advice, that sin becomes as it were natural; but that it is not very difficult, much less impossible to conquer this, corruption by the word of God." In the latter clause he supposes the assistance of the Spirit of God, because he elsewhere says, "We cannot give ourselves a pure heart, without the help of the Holy Spirit:^[44b] we must therefore pray, Create in me a new heart, O God."^[44c] He acknowledges in another place that Adam sinned, and that we, in our bodies,^[44d] are naturally prone to sin by our descent from him. Celsus states the doctrine after the manner of the Fatalists; asserting an original bias to evil, and accounting that bias to be insurmountable.

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The language of Origen as to the doctrine of future punishments is so obscure, as to make it difficult to determine what were his opinions. He seems however, in general to speak the language^[45] of Plato, upon a state of future existence, rather than that of Christ; and to furnish a convenient basis for the doctrine of purgatory, which the Church of Rome afterwards introduced among the credenda of Christianity. Although he distinctly states his own opinion upon this subject, yet he treats it with a caution almost amounting to suspicion, as to its practical consequences. This proves to us two things. First, That a belief of the eternity of future punishment was generally held by the Christians, or he would have stated his own opinion without reserve. Secondly, That Origen in some measure apprehended that the doctrine on this subject which he held, was not consistent in its operation with that gospel, which teaches that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present life."^[46a] Could he fear this and yet be firmly convinced of the truth of his own

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doctrines? Could he believe that the different parts of Christianity had an opposite tendency—that its Almighty framer would pull down with one arm what he erected with the other. It is remarkable that we learn from Celsus, what Origen as to this point might not have taught us; that the eternity of punishments was the common faith of the Christian Church. His words are, “They (the Christians) persuade themselves that the good, ^[46b] after this life, shall be happy, the wicked shall be plunged into everlasting wretchedness: from which opinion, neither let them, nor any other mortal depart.”

Such is a slight sketch of the doctrines of Christianity, as held by the Church at the period when this work was written. p. 47

That the faith of those times is the faith of the purest Churches in our own days, that the creed of one century is the creed of many ages, in itself, affords very convincing testimony to our religion.

The sameness of the faith, proves in the first place, the integrity of the Scriptures from which it is drawn. It proves also, that it is, by one and the same Divine Spirit, that all true Christians, in all successive periods, are taught and influenced.—It proves that Christians, instead of yielding themselves like the heathens, disciples to every succeeding philosopher, and “calling many men master,” have called only one their “teacher,” their “guide,” their “master,” which is God. It proves the superiority of Christianity to time and place; that it is a religion suited to all men, in all ages, and in all circumstances, and that it therefore bears the impress of a religion sent from God, and designed to be the faith of the universe. It enables us lastly, to consider our Creed, not as the conception of a solitary enthusiast, not a cunningly devised fable, or the scheme of an ambitious innovator; but to cast ourselves back, as it were, upon the faith of nations, and lay hold confidently of that Tree of Life which was planted by Christ, and whose fruit has been gathered by the hand, and whose root has been fed by the blood of saints in all ages. p. 48

CHAP. VII. p. 49 CONCLUSION.

HAVING thus noticed, in succession, the several topics which are chiefly insisted on in the Work before us; and having endeavoured to deduce from each, the distinct evidence in favour of Christianity, which it seemed to afford, it remains only to sum up the general testimony thus borne to our religion.

Let the evidence be first considered, which arises from the concessions and objections of Celsus. In the first place then he proves the existence of the Scriptures in his own times, he relates some facts extracted from them, and he corroborates many others, which would otherwise stand upon their unsupported authority; and thus he authenticates both the religion, and the Bible.

In the next place, as Celsus is usually considered the most subtle and malignant of the assailants of Christianity, the weakness of his assault discovers the difficulty of the attack, or, in other words, the strength of the religion. p. 50

In the third place, his admission of many facts, which he would have rejoiced to deny, is a strong testimony to the general belief of the facts, at the period at which he wrote.

Fourthly, His wary suppression of some circumstances incontrovertibly established by the authority of other persons, of much evidence which strengthened, and many writers who had served the Christian cause, ^[50] betrays his conviction that such facts could not be promulgated with safety to his argument.

Let us turn next to the reasonings and the reply of Origen, and to the evidence for Christianity supplied by them.

In the first place, as the infidel may find in the objections, all the weapons by which he is now accustomed to assault religion, so the believer may find in the answers of Origen, the shield which has repelled, and is sufficient to repel them for ever. p. 51

The confidence with which Origen appeals to the Scriptures, evinces the reverence in which they were held at an age when their spuriousness, if they had not been genuine, could so readily have been detected.

The exact correspondence of the Scriptural passages extracted by him, with our own copies, establishes the integrity of the sacred canon.

The confidence with which he challenges an investigation of the miracles, and the miraculous powers of the Church, for some ages, leaves us no room to doubt of their existence.

The firm faith of such a man as Origen, at a period when the evidence of Christianity lay most open to a scrutiny, is no small testimony of the truth of the religion. p. 52

The very rashness which is charged, and justly charged upon Origen, is so far satisfactory, that it assures us, the friends of Christianity, however injudicious, could open no avenues of attack through which the most dextrous adversaries could successfully assault the citadel of our faith.

Finally, The effect wrought upon the character of Origen, and his contemporaries, to which he continually refers, at once gives weight to their testimony, and vindicates the claim set up by Christianity, to a Divine efficacy accompanying its doctrines. Let Origen himself be examined. Such was his superiority to worldly attraction, that he ^[52] was content to live and die, a humble catechist at Alexandria. Such was his devotion to the sacred cause, that he sold ^[53a] his possessions for a daily allowance that would enable him to pursue the duties of piety and usefulness, without distraction. Such was his zeal, that he is said to have bequeathed to his fellow-creatures six thousand volumes, ^[53b] the fruits of his own labour. Nor is his character a solitary instance, upon the annals of Christianity. The great mass of individuals who drank at or near the fountain-head of the religion, were evidently "made whole." ^[53c] They were animated by another spirit, and quickened into another life. "Old things passed away, and all things became new." ^[53d] It was moreover in the power of these men to examine the sources of objection which were opened to them by Celsus; this they had certainly done, but their belief gathered strength by enquiry, and they sealed their testimony by their blood. We have in their conduct a proof of the impression which the arguments of Celsus made on their minds.

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Paganism began to tremble, when she saw that the new religion was not only a new creed, but a *new power*; she anticipated her own downfall when she exclaimed, "See how these Christians love one another." This evidence is peculiar to the Gospel. By this, under the Divine aid, it ascended the throne, and grasped the sceptre of the world. By this it will continue to conquer, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

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Upon the whole, the reply of Origen to Celsus may be considered as one of the most valuable legacies of antiquity. The importance of the subject, the talents of the contending authors, the ample evidence it affords to our faith, claim for it our earnest consideration; the errors of Origen are such as a little sagacity may correct, his merit will ever be confessed, while religion shall need an apology, or talent and piety have any claim to admiration. It is true that the revolution of ages has afforded, as might be expected, to truth additional evidence, and to error fresh refutation. So much however was effected, in their distinct enterprizes by the early enemies and friends of Christianity, that the vanity of unbelievers should be subdued, by discovering most of their objections to have been before advanced, and the faith of Christians should be confirmed, by knowing them to have been long since refuted.

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THE END.

FOOTNOTES.

[1a] The references made to the original work are to the edition of Guliel. Spencer, Cantabrigiensis, Collegii SS. Trinitatis Socius. 1658.

[1b] "ἀληθῆς λόγος." Con. Cels. P. lvi. 14.

[1c] Lardner, vol. VIII. 6.

[1d] Con. Cels. P. viii. 186.

[1e] Lucian, vol. I. p. 746.

[2a] Euseb. B. vii. c. 19.

[2b] Con. Cels. 231, &c.

[2c] Con. Cels. 56.

[3a] Milner, *Ec. Hist.* vol. I. 489. "Great honesty of mind was, if I mistake not, a ruling feature of Origen's character." Paley, vol. I. 292.

[3b] Eus. con. Hieroc. 511. Ed. *Paris*.

[3c] Hieron. Ep. 83. Op. Tom. IV. 655. Ed. *Paris*.

[3d] Cave, *Life of Origen*, Bull. def. Fid. Nic.

[3e] Huet. Ev. d'Aviâanches. M. de la Motte. Dupin.

[5a] Con. Cels. 181.

[5b] Ib. 183.

[5c] Ib. 186.

[6a] Con. Cels. 186.

[6b] Con. Cels. xiv. 167.

[6c] Jos. de *Jud. Antiq.*

[6d] Tatian ad Græ. Orat.

[6e] Con. Cels. 13.

[6f] Con. Cels. 167.

[6g] Ib. 115.

[7a] Con. Cels. 14. 260.

[7b] Ib. 189. et seq.

[8a] Con. Cels. 112.

[8b] Ib. 39.

[8c] Ib. 44.

[10a] Matt. ch. ii.

[10b] Afric. in Eus.

[10c] Hospini de Orig. Temp. c. iii.

[11a] "Cum audisset (Augustus) inter pueros, quos in Syriâ Herodes rex Judæorum intra bimatum jussit interfici, filium quoque ejus occisum, ait, Melius esse Herodis Porcum esse quam Filium." *Macrob. Sat. ii. 4.*

[11b] Eclogue 4th. In which the expressions relating to the Golden Age, of which he prophesied the advent, have the greatest similarity to those applied to the Messiah by Isaiah. See an admirable Essay, entitled, "Observations on 4th Eclogue." *Miller, 1810.*

"Tibi quem promitti sæpius audis." *Æneid, lib. vi. 791.*

[11c] Cic. Or. 3 contr. Catilin. lin. 72.

[11d] Bell. Catilin.

[11e] "Pererebuerat oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judæi profecti rerum potirentur." *Sueton. Vespasian, cap. iv. 8.*

[11f] "Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret oriens, profectique Judæâ rerum potirentur." *Tac. His. B. V. c. ix. 13.*

[13a] Con. Cels. 67.

[13b] Con. Cels. 147.

[13c] Matt. xi. 5.

[13d] Luke v. 32.

[14a] Con. Cels. 77.

[14b] "There are about eighty quotations from the books of the New Testament in Celsus." *Doddridge.*

[15] Con. Cels. 47.

[16a] The writings of Origen are esteemed of greater value than those of any other of the Fathers in proof of the authenticity of Scripture. Dr. Mills says, "Si hæc (op. Orig.) integra superessent, versaretur utique nobis ob oculos universus fere textus utriusque Testamenti qualis isto seculo ferebatur." *Mill. Proleg. 64. Ed. Ox. 1707.*

[16b] Those omitted in his quotations: Ruth, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Song of Solomon, Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk.

[16c] Philemon, 2 John, Jude.

[16d] Tobit, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees.

[16e] Matt. chap. ii. &c.

[16f] Con. Cels. 117.

[17a] Con. Cels. 346.

[17b] Ps. cxxxvii. 8.

[19a] Con. Cels. 22.

[19b] Ib. 25.

[20a] Con. Cels. 26.

[20b] The Author is aware, that many very profligate persons have been placed on the Calendar of Popish Saints. Such cases however apply to a later period in the Christian History than that to which he refers.

[20c] Con. Cels. 369.

[\[20d\]](#) Ib. 168.
[\[20e\]](#) Ib. 164.
[\[21a\]](#) Con. Cels. 329.
[\[21b\]](#) Horat. B. iii. Od. 16. Ovid. Met. 4.
[\[21c\]](#) John xviii. 36.
[\[21d\]](#) 1 John ii. 15.
[\[21e\]](#) James ii. 5.
[\[21f\]](#) Rom. v. 6.
[\[21g\]](#) Isaiah liii. 3.
[\[21h\]](#) Heb. i. 8.
[\[22a\]](#) Exod. xiv. 20.
[\[22b\]](#) Con. Cels. 72. 282. 79.
[\[22c\]](#) Ib. 82. 95.
[\[22d\]](#) Ib. 82. 340.
[\[22e\]](#) Ib. 94.
[\[22f\]](#) Ib. 98.
[\[23\]](#) Luke xvi. 31.
[\[24a\]](#) Euseb. v. c. 7. Tert. ad Scap. 4. Apol. 23. Theophil.
[\[24b\]](#) Con. Cels. 87.
[\[25a\]](#) Con. Cels. 53.
[\[25b\]](#) Doddridge—Sherlock—Chandler, Def. 429.
[\[26a\]](#) Con. Cels. 124.
[\[26b\]](#) Ib. 89.
[\[27a\]](#) Con. Cels. 34. 53. 124. 127. 337.
[\[27b\]](#) Ib. 34.
[\[28a\]](#) Con. Cels. 125.
[\[28b\]](#) Ib. 91.
[\[28c\]](#) Ib. 88.
[\[30a\]](#) Ex. viii. 19.
[\[30b\]](#) Con. Cels. 87.
[\[30c\]](#) Matt. xii. 26.
[\[31\]](#) Acts ii. 6.
[\[34a\]](#) Con. Cels. 147.
[\[34b\]](#) Ib. 147.
[\[35a\]](#) Con. Cels. 150.
[\[35b\]](#) Ib. 86.
[\[35c\]](#) Ib. 370.
[\[35d\]](#) Ib. 365.
[\[35e\]](#) Ib. 115.
[\[36a\]](#) Con. Cels. 128.
[\[36b\]](#) Ib. 4.
[\[36c\]](#) Ib. 373.
[\[37a\]](#) Con. Cels. 375.
[\[37b\]](#) 1 Kings viii. 27.
[\[39\]](#) Con. Cels. 266.
[\[40a\]](#) Waterland's Def.

[40b] Con. Cels. 287.

[40c] Ib. 375.

[40d] Ib. 237.

[40e] Ib. 367.

[40f] Ib. 158.

[41a] Con. Cels. 308. 325.

[41b] Ib. 63.

[41c] Ib. 233.

[41d] Ib. 382.

[41e] Ib. 46. 160. εὐσέβεια.

[41f] Ib. 386.

[41g] Ib. 239.

[41h] Ib. 169.

[41i] Ib. 164.

[41j] Ib. 171. 342. 387. 386. &c. &c.

[41k] It may be observed, that although charges were laid against some of Origen's doctrines after his death, none were made against his orthodoxy on the subject of the Trinity, till after the time of Arius. The Eustathians then opposed him on the ground of some expressions which he had used against the Sabellians, by which he separated the hypostases of the Godhead. His orthodoxy was however maintained by St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Basil, St. Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Didymus. The words of St. Athanasius are "Verbum autem ab æterno esse cum patre, nec alterius substantiæ vel hypostasis, sed ipsius paternæ substantiæ proprium illum esse, quemadmodum dixerunt qui interfuerunt Synodo, liceat nobis rursus audire etiam ex laborioso Origine."—*Op. Athan.* T. 1. p. 277.

Jerome about the year 390 said of Origen, "Quem post Apostolos, Ecclesiarum Magistrum nemo nisi imperitus negabat. *Præf. ad nom. Heb.*" His celebrated controversy with Ruffinus then began, and as the latter was an admirer and translator of Origen's writings, the character of Origen was involved in the dispute, and Jerome heaped upon it all the abuse he thought due to Ruffinus. Bishop Bull says of this transaction, "Hieronymus odiò suò in Originem seu potiùs in Originis interpretem Ruffinum, nimium indulgens, indeque omnia ejus verba dictaque in pessimum sensum trahere amans."—*Bullii. Op. Om.* p. 121. And again, "Hieronymus in hac Origenis accusatione, animum à candore alienum atque affectibus abreptum ita manifestè prodidit, ut in cæteris criminationibus fidem sibi omnem derogâsse videatur."—*Bullii. Op. Om.* p. 123.

Milner (*Ecc. Hist.* I. 496) observes that the Arians who had so very little assistance from precedents, were glad to catch at the shadow of an argument drawn from Origen's illustrious name, and they accordingly sought out expressions obscure in themselves, but plainly contradictory to the general tenor of his opinions, upon the ground of which they claim him as their supporter. Milner observes of these men (*Ecc. Hist.* II. 163) that every thing mean and sordid, cruel and inhuman, ambitious and perfidious is on their side, and this is the character of their conduct towards the writings of Origen.

Of modern writers the opinion is decisive. Bishop Bull says, "Ita mecum statuo Origenem in articulo de fillii divinitate adeoque de S. Trinitate revera Catholicum fuisse."—*Bullii. Op. Om.* p. 127. Waterland, Chandler, Fiddes, and Cudworth hold the same sentiment.

[42] Con. Cels. 35.

[43a] Con. Cels. 34.

[43b] Ib. 8.

[43c] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

[43d] John v. 39.

[44a] Con. Cels. 153.

[44b] Ib. 354.

[44c] Ps. li. 10.

[44d] Con. Cels. 190.

[45] Con. Cels. 242. 292. &c.

[46a] Titus ii. 12.

[46b] Con. Cels. 409.

[50] Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Tatian.

[52] *Cave's Lives*.

[53a] Euseb. B. VI. c. 3.

[53b] Epiph. Epis. Const. contra Hær. p. 141. Ed. 1617.

De Illust. Eccle. Script. 249. Ed. *Colon*. 1580.

Geor. Cedr. Compen. Hist. 253. Ed. *Par*. 1647.

Mic. Glycæ. An. 242. Ed. *Par*. 1660.

[53c] John v. 4.

[53d] 2 Cor. v. 17.

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