and if it is ſolid, the Chriſtian religion is fully eſtabliſhed. The proofs for the authenticity of the New Te­ſtament have this peculiar advantage, that they are plain and ſimple, and involve no metaphyſical ſubtilties.— Every man who can diſtinguiſh truth from falſehood muſt see their force; and if there are any so blinded by pre­judice, or corrupted by licentiouſneſs, as to attempt by ſophiſtry to elude them, their ſophiſtry will be eaſily detected by every man of common underſtanding, who has read the hiſtorical evidence with candour and at­tention. Inſtead, therefore, of declaiming againſt the infidel, we ſolicit his attention to this ſubject, convin­ced, that where truth reſides, it will ſhine with ſo con­ſtant and clear a light, that the combined ingenuity of all the deiſts ſince the beginning of the world will ne­ver be able to extinguiſh or to obſcure it. If the books of the New Teſtament are really genuine, oppoſition will incite the Chriſtian to bring forward the evidence; and thus by the united efforts of the deiſt and the Chriſtins, the arguments will be ſtated with all the clearneſs and accuracy of which they are ſuſceptible in ſo remarkable a degree.

It is ſurpriſing that the adverſaries of Chriſtiani­ty have not always made their firſt attacks in this quar­ter; for if they admit that the writings of the New Teſtament are as ancient as we affirm, and compoſed by the perſons to whom they are aſcribed, they muſt al­low, if they reaſon fairly, that the Chriſtian religion is true.

The apoſtles allude frequently in their epiſtles to the gift of miracles, which they had communicated to the Chriſtian converts by the impoſition of hands, in con­firmation of the doctrine delivered in their ſpeeches and writings, and ſometimes to miracles which they themſelves had performed. Now if theſe epiſtles are really genuine, it is hardly poſſible to deny thoſe miracles to be true@@. The caſe is here entirely different from that of an hiſtorian, who relates extraordinary events in the courſe of his narrative, ſince either credulity or an ac­tual intention to deceive may induce him to deſcribe as true a ſeries of falſehoods reſpecting a foreign land or diſtant period. Even to the Evangeliſts might an adverſary of the Chriſtian religion make this objection: but to write to perſons with whom we ſtand in the reareſt connection, “I have not only performed mira­cles in your preſence, but have likewiſe communicated to you the ſame extraordinary endowments,” to write in this manner, if nothing of the kind had ever hap­pened, would require ſuch an incredible degree of ef­frontery, that he who poſſeſſed it would not only expoſe himſelf to the utmoſt ridicule, but by giving his ad­verſaries the faireſt opportunity to detect his impoſture, would ruin the cauſe which he attempted to ſupport.

St Paul’s Firſt Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians is addreſſed to a community to which he had preached the goſpel only three Sabbath days, when he was forced to quit it by the perſecution of the populace. In this epiſtle he appeals to the miracles which he had performed, and to the gifts of the Holy Spirit which he had communicated. Now, is it poſſible, without for­feiting all pretenſions to common ſenſe, that, in writing to a community which he had lately eſtabliſhed, he could ſpeak of miracles performed, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt communicated, if no member of the ſociety had ſeen the one, or received the other?

To ſuppoſe that an impoſtor could write to the cou­verts or adverſaries of the new religion ſuch epiſtles as theſe, with a degree of triumph over his opponents, and yet maintain his authority, implies ignorance and ſtupidity hardly to be believed, Credulous as the Chriſtians have been in later ages, and even ſo early as the third century, no leſs ſevere were they in their inqui­ries, and guarded againſt deception, at the introduction of Chriſtianity. This character is given them even by Lucian, a writer of the ſecond century, who vented his ſatire not only againſt certain Chriſtians @@\*, who had ſupplied Peregrinus with the means of ſubſiſtence, but alſo againſt heathen oracles and pretended wonders. He relates of his impoſtor (Pſeudomantis), that he attempted nothing ſupernatural in the preſence of the Chriſtians and Epicureans. This Pſeudomantis exclaims before the whole aſſembly, “Away with the Chriſtians, away with the Epicureans, and let thoſe on­ly remain who believe in the Deity!" (ωιϛευντεϛ τωϴεω) upon which the populace took up ſtones to drive away the ſuſpicious; while the other philoſophers, Py­thagoreans, Platoniſts, and Stoics, as credulous friends and protectors of the cauſe, were permitted to re­main @@§.

It is readily acknowledged, that the arguments drawn from the authenticity of the New Teſtament only eſtabliſh the truth of the miracles performed by the apoſtles, and are not applicable to the miracles of our Saviour; yet, if we admit the three firſt goſpels to be genuine, the truth of the Chriſtian religion will be proved from the prophecies of Jeſus. For if theſe goſpels were compoſed by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, at the time in which all the primitive Chriſtians affirm, that is, previous to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, they muſt be inſpired; for they contain a circumſtantial pro­phecy of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and determine the period at which it was accompliſhed. Now it was impoſſible that human ſagacity could foreſee that event; for when it was predicted nothing was more improbable. The Jews were reſolved to avoid an open re­bellion, well knowing the greatneſs of their danger, and ſubmitted to the oppreſſions of their governors in the hope of obtaining redreſs from the court of Rome.— The circumſtance which gave birth to theſe misfortunes is ſo trifling in itſelf, that, independent of its conſequences, it would not deſerve to be recorded. In the narrow entrance to a ſynagogue in Caeſarea, ſome perſon had made an offering of birds merely with a view to irritate the Jews. The inſult excited their indig­nation, and occaſioned the ſhedding of blood. With­out this trifling accident, which no human wiſdom could foreſee even the day before it happened, it is poſ­ſible that the prophecy of Jeſus would never have been fulfilled. But Florus, who was then procurator of Judea, converted this private quarrel into public hoſtilities, and Compelled the Jewiſh nation to rebel contrary to its wiſh and reſolution, in order to avoid what the Jews had threatened, an impeachment before the Ro­man emperor for his exceſſive cruelties. But even af­ter this rebellion had broken out, the deſtruction of the temple was a very improbable event. It was not the practice of the Romans to deſtroy the magnificent

@@@[mu] Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament.

@@@[m]\* De Morte Peregrini,

@@@[m]§ 12. 13. 16. Ed. Reitz, Tom. 111. p. 334-338, 341.

@@@[m]§ Alexander seu Pseudomantis, 25. 28. Tom. 11. p. 232, 233-244, 245.