Impartial Reflections on the Gospel

Bruno Cariou on June 2, 2019 by Elements of Racial Education

We only know the story of the life of Jesus Christ from the works that several of his disciples published a few years after his death, the number of Christians having multiplied enough that the greater part of them did not exist. would never have known the head of the religion they had embraced. Various historical accounts were seen to appear containing a summary of the words and actions of the Savior. These little writings had the title Gospel or Happy New ; this is how the first Christians called the doctrine which their master had come to announce to men, and which they themselves continued to announce after his death and to spread everywhere.

It is certain that the number of these stories published shortly after the death of Jesus Christ must have been great. St. Jerome, at the time of which most of these works still survived, assures us of this. All the writers of the first centuries of the Church attest to this, and St. Luke marks him so positively at the head of his Gospel that when we had no other testimony to this than his, we would not be permitted. to doubt it: since many people have undertaken to write the history of what happened among us, says St. Luke (1) , I thought it appropriate to do the same after educated about everything carefully, by those who have witnessed it. On which it is good to observe that those who know the Gospel only through French translations are not ordinarily struck by the positive testimonies that St. Luke gives here to the multiplicity of Evangelists. Quan do quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narationem, quœ in nobis complete sunt, rerum: visum est mihi etc. Luc Cap. I, because it pleased the French translators to make the original term πολλι by that of several which is almost always heard in our language by a relatively small number, instead of the Greek πολλι and the Latin multi which responds to it being opposed to παΰροι and paucicannot have this meaning. The translators apparently used it in this way, to push away from the minds of the readers a scandalous idea that this multiplicity of Gospels would have given birth to. Most of these gospel stories were attributed to famous people in Christianity. It was either apostles or distinguished disciples of Jesus Christ that they were assured to be the authors, and in the infancy of the Church the Christians for whose use they were written did not doubt that they did not. were truly of those whose names they bore. Besides the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Luke and St. John, some were attributed to St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Andrew, St. Thomas, St. Jacques, St. Philippe. , in St. Barthélémy, in St. Mathias; there was one written under the name of the twelve apostles:there was a Gospel according to the Hebrews or the Nazarenes, another according to the Egyptians; and some critics claim that the latter two are the oldest of all.

Christianity was at odds with itself from the moment of its birth, and many of its rebellious children fabricated various Gospels according to their tastes and prejudices.

Ebion, Cérinte, Basilides, Marcion, Appelle, the Gnostics, the Carpocratians, the Valentinians, etc. published some which authorized their dogmas; there were even some visionaries enough not to exclude the perfidious Judas from the number of the Evangelists. Indeed a Gospel appeared under his name as well as that of the other apostles (2). But above all it must have been a very curious thing that the work of which St. Epiphanes speaks under the title of the Gospel of Eve for the use of certain Gnostics (3).

Finally, not to mention the Gospel of Nicodemus, that of St. Barnabas and a few others that we perhaps regard a little lightly as works after the first centuries, because they have not been cited from the ancients. , there appeared at that time a Gospel which contained only the history of the first years of Jesus Christ under the title of Gospel of Childhood , and another work which likewise contained only the history of the first years of the Virgin under the title of The Drunkard of the Nativity of Mary (4).

The number of all these different Gospels is brought up to nearly fifty, and of this number there are at least thirty which are from early antiquity. It is true that one did not notice in these works a great conformity either as to facts or as to dogmas. Among the first Christians, some regarded Jesus Christ as a pure man, others claimed that he had only the appearance of humanity, others maintained that he was God and man altogether, and so other less important dogmas. As the Jews were at first the only ones who embraced Christianity, and the sectarian spirit always far removed from uniformity, then reigned in excess among them, each believed himself entitled to speak out the new doctrine in accordance with his particular prejudices.

Hence the little connection that was in these Evangelical writings; hence came the reproaches of error and imposture which these new sectaries made against one another. The diversity of opinions in matters of religion has always been a source of unjust judgments for men; it is a stumbling block where even the most moderate minds almost always fail.

Instead of pitying the blindness of their colleagues, the first Christians saw in involuntary errors only imposture and malice; however, either orthodox or heretics, all equally warned for their opinion, had an equal respect for the books which contained them, and an equal zeal to disseminate them.

Although the dogmas of the Ebionites or the Gnostics were authorized in several of these ancient Gospels, it must nevertheless be admitted that a good part of the evangelical stories which appeared then, were published by Orthodox Christians: some of these Gospels have come down to this date. to us, like that of Childhood (5), the Book of the Nativity, the Proto-Gospel of Saint James (6), the Gospel of Nicodemus, etc. We have long fragments of several others, and if nothing is found there which does not injure reason by the nonsense and extravagance with which they are filled, it is at least as sure that it is difficult to find something there. something that is contrary to faith. Moreover, the preface to St. Luke that we have just quoted seems to justify in some way the authors of the Gospels who preceded it.This evangelist agrees that many others have written before him. It is not to refute them that he takes up the pen, he does not condemn or disapprove in any way what they have done, but he only believes himself in the right to do the same, because he is is accurately instructed by eyewitnesses.Visum est & mihi .

It is impossible to give the precise date of the time when these Gospels were written, it suffices to say that they are almost as old as the others.

For more than a century Christians making use of the kind of freedom which always accompanies a new and still shapeless establishment; each believer admitted as the dogma of his faith the evangelical story which he found received in the place where he was accustomed. The most learned chronologist who has appeared today has shown in an express work that the Canonical Gospels as well as the others remained buried in the places which had seen them arise until the time of Trajan's conquests on the Parthians. It was only then that they began to be known and to become public. Through this darkness which covers the cradle of the Church, the faithful enlightened by a heavenly light have known how to discern the true Gospels from the false ones,but those whom the torch of faith does not guide in this thick darkness will never disentangle the true from the false or rather will perceive in these Evangelical Writings no other conformity than a marvelous outraged which revolts their reason: they will treat also of fable and the apocryphal Gospels and the true works of the apostles.

At the end of the second century the Church began to take shape, Orthodox Christians at the same time began to recognize only four Gospels as legitimate; whereupon the enemies of the Christian name have not forgotten to reproach their adversaries at all times, that Christianity beginning to declare itself, Christians ashamed of the multiplicity of these little stories which ran under the name of the Gospels, made the choice of four more reasonable and more consistent with each other, and declared them only Canonical to the exclusion of the others; the rejected Gospels did not fail to remain in the hands of several faithful, and to be looked at over time with the same veneration as before: Finally the whole body of the Church sided with the wisest party,and in the third century the Canon of the Gospels appears to have been generally received by all Orthodox Christians. Thus all the works of which the most respectable men of the nascent Church were believed to be authors, were no longer regarded as anything but productions of imposture or error. It is sad to agree either that the Christians then rejected with contempt the legitimate works of the apostles, or that in the purest and most innocent time of the Church the imposture or the fanaticism could have seduced to such an extent the spirit of the first faithful: however their intention was good, and the zeal of religion is capable of rendering men of bad faith without feeling remorse, often even without noticing it, and the authors of these false Gospels have it perhaps be testified to the truth by their blood.

We must believe that the Christians of the third century admitted in the Canon of the Scriptures four Gospels only because the others seemed to them supposed, it is the only sane reason that one can give. However Saint Irenaeus who lived in the time when the Evangelical Canon was formed, and who is that of the ecclesiastical writers among whom the number of four evangelists is found for the first time, St. Irenaeus, I say, relies heavily on other reasons that we will find less solid. “There are,” he said, “four evangelists, neither more nor less, because there are four parts of the world and four main winds: For as the Church is spread throughout the whole earth, she must have four columns that support it. God, he then adds, is seated on a Cherub which is shaped like four different animals,and the four animals are the figure of our four Gospels. »After which he compared that of St. Mathieu to the man, that of St. Mark to the eagle, that of St. Luke to the ox, and that of St. John to the lion, against the custom which has since prevailed. . This allegory of St. Irenaeus has been found to the taste of all the Fathers, except that they have varied a little on the application of animals to the Gospels; for, for example, St. Athanasius applies the ox to St. Mark, and the lion to St. Luke. St. Augustine finds that the man is better suited to St. Mark and the lion to St. Matthew. But St. Jerome put things in the order we see them today, and his profound scholarship in the Scriptures apparently causes his opinion to be and will be until the end the only one followed.Mathieu to man, that of St. Mark to the eagle, that of St. Luc to the beef, and that of St. John to the lion, against the custom which has since prevailed. This allegory of St. Irenaeus has been found to the taste of all the Fathers, except that they have varied a little on the application of animals to the Gospels; for, for example, St. Athanasius applies the ox to St. Mark, and the lion to St. Luke. St. Augustine finds that the man is better suited to St. Mark and the lion to St. Matthew. But St. Jerome put things in the order we see them today, and his profound scholarship in the Scriptures apparently causes his opinion to be and will be until the end the only one followed.Mathieu to the man, that of St. Marc to the eagle, that of St. Luc to the ox, and that of St. John to the lion, against the custom which has prevailed since. This allegory of St. Irenaeus has been found to the taste of all the Fathers, except that they have varied a little on the application of animals to the Gospels; for, for example, St. Athanasius applies the ox to St. Mark, and the lion to St. Luke. St. Augustine finds that the man is better suited to St. Mark and the lion to St. Matthew. But St. Jerome put things in the order we see them today, and his profound scholarship in the Scriptures apparently causes his opinion to be and will be until the end the only one followed.Irenaeus was found to the taste of all the Fathers, except that they varied a little on the application of animals to the Gospels; for, for example, St. Athanasius applies the ox to St. Mark, and the lion to St. Luke. St. Augustine finds that the man is better suited to St. Mark and the lion to St. Matthew. But St. Jerome put things in the order we see them today, and his profound scholarship in the Scriptures apparently causes his opinion to be and will be until the end the only one followed.Irenaeus was found to the taste of all the Fathers, except that they varied a little on the application of animals to the Gospels; for, for example, St. Athanasius applies the ox to St. Mark, and the lion to St. Luke. St. Augustine finds that the man is better suited to St. Mark and the lion to St. Matthew. But St. Jerome put things in the order we see them today, and his profound scholarship in the Scriptures apparently causes his opinion to be and will be until the end the only one followed.and his profound learning in the Scriptures apparently causes his opinion to be and will be until the end the only one followed.and his profound learning in the Scriptures apparently causes his opinion to be and will be until the end the only one followed.

The Gospel of St. Matthew is the first of four that the Church has admitted in the Evangelical Canon. Millius, in these ample prolegomena which have just appeared at the head of his New Testament, believes the Gospel of the Hebrews, that of the Egyptians, and some others, anterior to that of St. Matthew; it is an indifferent question which would not be easy to resolve. It is also useless to know if St. Matthew wrote in Hebrew or in Greek, since supposing that he wrote in Hebrew, the original disappeared almost at the time of his birth, and we only have the translation left. Greek. According to Millius the Gospel of St. Matthew was not written until the year 61 of Jesus Christ, 28 years after his death. This same author places the Gospel of St. Mark two years after that of St. Matthew, the Gospel of St. Luke one year after that of St. Mark,and the Gospel of St. John in the year 97, that is to say 64 years after the passion of the Savior.

Some Fathers have argued that Saint Matthew wrote his Gospel only six years after the death of Jesus Christ; but they do not support their opinion with any proof, and they base themselves only on a supposed very uncertain tradition that a more exact critic has not dared to adopt. After all, Millius although one of the most profound of those who worked on the New Testament, apparently did not come across better in his conjectures. We must admit, as we have already said, that the first century of the Church enveloped all this in a thick cloud which will always be impenetrable to critics; and unfortunately the thickness of this cloud, by hiding from men the fundamental point of the Christian faith, that is to say the quality of the evangelical authors as well as the time in which they wrote, will serve eternally as a refuge for the incredulity.

The apostles and all the disciples of Jesus Christ were Jews. When evangelical history did not teach us about the dignity of St. Matthew and the place he held among the apostles, the style of this evangelist would easily make us know his country. Although the Judaic spirit is also noticeable in the other evangelists, it is particularly in St. Matthew that it is most evident. Allegory, the perpetual allusion to the Scriptures reigns in him from the beginning to the end. The taste he has for mystical applications is declared from the very entry of his work in the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, which the evangelist sends down from Abraham, David and all the kings of Judah through Solomon. As there were fourteen generations known to all Jews from Abraham to David, St.Matthew no doubt finding something mysterious in this number of two times seven, undertakes to count only fourteen generations from David to the captivity of Babylon, and the same precise number of fourteen generations from the captivity of Babylon to Jesus -Christ; after which for fear that by immediately reading this genealogy one would not have paid attention to the mystery hidden under this number, the evangelist himself made this remark: "Thus," he said (7), he there are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the captivity of Babylon, and from the captivity of Babylon to Jesus Christ, fourteen. "and the same precise number of fourteen generations from the captivity of Babylon to Jesus Christ; after which for fear that by immediately reading this genealogy one would not have paid attention to the mystery hidden under this number, the evangelist himself made this remark: "Thus," he said (7), he There are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the captivity of Babylon, and from the captivity of Babylon to Jesus Christ, fourteen. "and the same precise number of fourteen generations from the captivity of Babylon to Jesus Christ; after which for fear that by immediately reading this genealogy one would not have paid attention to the mystery hidden under this number, the evangelist himself made this remark: "Thus," he said (7), he there are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the captivity of Babylon, and from the captivity of Babylon to Jesus Christ, fourteen. "and from the captivity of Babylon to Jesus Christ, fourteen. "and from the captivity of Babylon to Jesus Christ, fourteen. "

We do not understand what the idea of ​​St. Matthew could have been in this remark which laymen have always treated as childish affectation; besides that according to the evangelist even the number of three times fourteen is not found in his calculation, and that we are obliged to count the same man twice in order to make him quadrate correctly. What most embarrassed the faith of the faithful was that St. Matthew was compelled in favor of his mystery to deny the Scriptures and to skip an interval of 77 years, making Joram father of Ozias, though 'he was only his great-grandfather. Moreover, it is even less conceivable how in a space of 600 years, that is to say from Captivity until Jesus Christ, there would be only thirteen generations, especially since St. Luke who gives a genealogy of Jesus Christ quite different from that of St. Matthew,no less than 22 in the same interval.

The actions and words of Jesus Christ which seem the most indifferent are almost always recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew for the fulfillment of some prophecy, and we must admit that we often need the eyes of the faith to see the correctness of its allegorical applications. If Jesus Christ, for example, returns from Egypt after the death of Herod, it is , says St. Matthew (8), so that this word of Scripture may be fulfilled, I recalled my son from 'Egypt : an event that the Jews knew to have happened over 1500 years ago and of which the Gospel prophesies. If Jesus Christ then settled in Nazareth, it is because it is written (9) he will be called Nazarene; which means in the language of Scripture, he will be consecrated to God, and will not drink anything that can intoxicate: something that had been said of Samson, of Samuel, etc. and who could understand Jesus Christ (who drank wine) only by a forced allusion which was based only on the verisimilitude of the terms. This first Chapter of St. Matthew alone provides us with this example. It is thus almost the other applications which he makes to the Scriptures in the course of his Gospel; we can say that they are a stumbling block for unruly minds and a perpetual opportunity for the faithful to submit their understanding under the obedience of faith.

There is so much conformity between the Gospel of St. Matthew and that of St. Mark, that it is difficult to avoid confusing them, and not to regard these two Gospels as the same work (10 ). The Church commands the faithful to distinguish them; the commentators thus try to save this too sensitive conformity, they suppose that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, that St. Mark who had the original of St. Matthew made a kind of Greek translation, but in a very little free, that is to say by omitting certain things and adding a few circumstances which are not very considerable. Some time later, commentators still suppose, the same Hebrew original of St. Matthew was translated into Greek literally, and the one who made this translation had in hand the Greek Gospel of St.Marc used his words and his sentences. Hence, it is said, that great conformity which is found between St. Mark and St. Matthew, not only as to things, but also as to expressions. The unbelievers who, moreover, take little interest in the distinction between these two Gospels, do not fail to feel the weakness of an explanation which the commentators do not support by any proof, it seems to them a pure system, and they do not perceive any difference between the Gospel of St. Matthew and that of St. Mark, only in that the latter is a little shorter than the other, St. Mark having omitted more things reported by St. Matthew that he added others.The unbelievers who, moreover, take little interest in the distinction between these two Gospels, do not fail to feel the weakness of an explanation which the commentators do not support by any proof, it seems to them a pure system, and they do not perceive any difference between the Gospel of St. Matthew and that of St. Mark, only in that the latter is a little shorter than the other, St. Mark having omitted more things reported by St. Matthew that he added others.The unbelievers who, moreover, take little interest in the distinction between these two Gospels, do not fail to feel the weakness of an explanation which the commentators do not support by any proof, it seems to them a pure system, and they do not perceive any difference between the Gospel of St. Matthew and that of St. Mark, only in that the latter is a little shorter than the other, St. Mark having omitted more things reported by St. Matthew that he added others.Mark having omitted more things reported by St. Matthew than he added others.Mark having omitted more things reported by St. Matthew than he added others.

If St. Mark followed the Gospel of St. Matthew so accurately, that he seems to have translated it almost word for word, the same cannot be said of St. Luke. The latter had no qualms about deviating from the evangelists who had written before him; having been carefully instructed in all things by the apostles themselves and by those who from the beginning had been eyewitnesses to what he was about to write, he begins his story with the marvelous thing that preceded the birth of Jesus Christ, which undoubtedly deserved well not to be omitted by Saint Matthew, the miraculous birth of Saint John the Baptist, the Prophecies of Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simon, Anne, the adoration of the Pastors which was preceded by a miracle,the wisdom and knowledge of Jesus Christ which in his childhood was the admiration of the Doctors assembled in the temple of Jerusalem; all these wonders seemed to merit some mention of St. Matthew, they announced greater wonders that Jesus Christ was to perform, and they would have prepared the minds of the Doctors for this continual series of miracles which accompany the last years of his life. . In truth Saint Matthew speaks of a fact which followed the birth of Jesus Christ of which Saint Luke does not mention; it is the adoration of the Magi that a miraculous star led to Bethlehem, which gave rise to the barbarous defense of Herod and the massacre of the Innocents. We are surprised that St. Luke so well instructed in all things from the beginning, and who goes into such great detail on the childhood of Jesus Christ,could have omitted a fact so considerable, and which must have made so much noise in Judea; however either St. Luke ignored it, or he did not deign to report it, and the latter even seems more likely than the other; because finally some efforts which the commentators make to accord St. Luke with St. Matthew on the time of the birth of Jesus Christ, it is impossible to reconcile them on this point. St. Matthew gives birth to Jesus Christ at the end of Herod's reign, St. Luke on the contrary places his birth at the time of the enumeration that Cyrenius Governor of Syria made in Judea by order of Augustus, and this enumeration on occasion of which the Gospel leads Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem did not arrive until after the reunion of Judea with the Roman Empire, the tenth and last year of the reign of Archelaus successor of Herod,as Joseph expressly remarks. St. Luke was therefore able to deliberately omit a fact which seemed to him chimerical, since it must have taken place ten years before the time in which he places the birth of Jesus Christ.

But what makes one suspect even more strongly that St. Luke did not know the Gospel of St. Matthew, or at least that he believed himself better informed than him, are the different genealogies that these evangelists make of Jesus Christ, in which apart from David, Salathiel, Zerubbabel, we do not see two names which resemble each other. We have said that St. Matthew brings down Jesus Christ from David, Solomon and all the kings of Judah; St. Luke also traces his ancestors back to David, but through Nathan and another of his children whose descendants did not reign. It is here truly that the faithful need this simplicity without which one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven,and that the commentators, on the contrary, are obliged to employ all the subtlety of which the human mind is capable to save such a manifest contradiction: even then they do so only by building a system composed of several assumptions one upon the other, which appear not only devoid of proof, but even of all probability.

The most received opinion is that Saint Luke wanted to describe the genealogy of Jesus Christ through the Virgin, instead of St. Matthew writing that of St. Joseph. Here is already, they say, the greatest difficulty saved by this supposition, it is thus that one claims to prove it. St. Luke gives Joseph Héli for father; now Heli is an abbreviation of Heliakim: (we know moreover by tradition that the father of the Virgin was called Joachim and not Eliakim); it follows that this Heli whom the evangelist says to have been father of Joseph was truly father of Mary his wife. In truth, St. Luke says quite clearly that Joseph was the son of Heli, but he wanted to make it understood by this that he was his son-in-law or the husband of his daughter.Have the commentators not felt that such subtleties with which one can make the evangelists say whatever one wants are also apt to scandalize the faith of the simple, and to give rise to the mockery of the layman?

However the difficulties are not yet removed by this system, the names of Salathiel and Zorobabel which meet in the middle of the two genealogies are always embarrassing, and if one gives two sons to Zorobabel, from one of whom one supposes Joseph descended, and Mary on the other hand, we do not know how to give two fathers to Salathiel whom Saint Matthew made son of Jechonias, and St. Luke son of Néry; besides, the great difficulty which is found in the number of generations of one and the other genealogy still obliges new assumptions. From David to Jesus Christ St. Matthew has only 27 generations and that is very little for a space of a thousand years; instead that St. Luke with more probability has 43. It is necessary, they say,that the ancestors of Joseph were married old and that of the Virgin were married younger; as if Scripture did not teach us that several of the kings of Judah, from whom Saint Joseph is descended, had their children in a very great youth, who are likewise among his ancestors.

Finally, a difficulty which will certainly never be answered is that if St. Luke had known the Gospel of St. Matthew, or had wanted to spare it, he would not have failed to say that he wrote the genealogy of Jesus Christ through Mary his Mother and not through Joseph, as he puts it positively. The Evangelist, observing on this point what the least accurate historians have always observed, would have spared Christians many tortures which they unnecessarily gave themselves from the first centuries of the Church to accord the Holy Spirit with him- even.

Whatever may be the plan of St. Luke, it seems that it is to the genealogy of the Virgin that the Evangelists should preferably attach themselves, since Jesus Christ was son of Joseph only according to the Law, to the place as it was of Mary and according to the Law and according to nature; but it was necessary to make the Messiah of the race of David, and Mary apparently did not descend from it. The Gospel, which should have marked him, does not say the least word about it; the tradition, which we use so subtly to prove that Heli or Joakim are the same name, this same tradition, I say, teaches us on the contrary that Mary was of the Tribe of Levi. St. Epiphanius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Augustine speak everywhere of these ancient stories where the father of the Virgin was named Joachim, but they treat these works with contempt, and St. Augustine especially rejects them,because they made Joachim of the race of Levi there. This is how commentators know how to take from tradition what suits them and leave what embarrasses them. Evangelists to all appearances were of the opinion that it was enough that the Messiah also descended from David; now Jesus Christ descended in this way, since Joseph was his father according to the Law, that is to say, his mother's husband. Without stopping at several less important places where St. Luke and the other evangelists seem to contradict each other, and which have more or less exercised the minds of the commentators, critics of somewhat scrupulously correct cannot help but be shocked at the little conformity which one notices in the Gospels, as to the order and arrangement of facts.Why did the Holy Spirit who enlightened these divine authors make them so neglect a point so capable of attracting the belief of men? With the exception of St. Mark who seems to have followed St. Matthew step by step, we must admit that the order is strangely reversed in the other two evangelists; they never observe the times, often they confuse places; one places at the end what the other puts at the beginning; and if we pretend to accord them, as to the meaning and the substance of things, we have only to cast our eyes on an Evangelical Concordance, to see the trouble we find in reconciling them over the rest.they never observe the times, often they confuse places; one places at the end what the other puts at the beginning; and if we pretend to accord them, as to the meaning and the substance of things, we have only to cast our eyes on an Evangelical Concordance, to see the trouble we find in reconciling them over the rest.they never observe the times, often they confuse places; one places at the end what the other puts at the beginning; and if we pretend to accord them, as to the meaning and the substance of things, we have only to cast our eyes on an Evangelical Concordance, to see the trouble we find in reconciling them over the rest.

Christians today are guessing the age of Jesus Christ, the number of years that he ministered, and what he said and did in his particular years. The chronologists we follow on all things are those who seem to conjecture best. St. Luke, so well informed of everything, does not agree in his narration with either St. Matthew or St. John; so that one would say that the evangelists wrote their history as the things occurred to them in the mind, without continuation and without regard to time or place. St. Luke, however, is one of the four whose style better resembles that of a historian; his way of writing even seems flowery, if we compare it to that of St. Matthew and St. Mark, whose simple style edifies the faithful and seems to laymen far below simplicity.The style of St. John is bloated, obscure, enigmatic, everything feels the mystery in his Gospel. Saint Luke is more natural and clearer, his narration more exact, his images finer and more touching. Nothing is compared in the other evangelists to the parables of the Samaritan, the Wicked Rich and the Prodigal Son, which Saint Luke related. Since the number of those who undertook the history of Jesus Christ was already great at the time of St. Luke, it will easily be judged that it must have been much more considerable when the Gospel of St. John appeared; Christians were then greatly multiplied, the field was open to all the faithful, each had the freedom to write, or what he said he had seen, or what he claimed to have heard said: what must therefore be the number of these Gospel stories forty years after St. Luke,time when it is supposed that St. John was writing!

The story spread any light on the I stcentury of the Church, the Fathers were obliged to have recourse to tradition to know roughly the time when St. John published his Gospel; she taught them that this beloved disciple of the Savior was kept on earth 70 years after the death of his master, in order to give at the end of his days an authentic witness to the Divinity of the Messiah, whom his enemies wanted to destroy. What is certain is that the Gospel of St. John was not composed until many years after the birth of Christianity; but the precise time when it appeared is absolutely uncertain, it is hidden under a thick cloud which hides our sight of the cradle of the Church. The tradition which one is obliged to consult is in itself an uncertain guide since it authorizes indifferently fables and truth.

The anti-Trinitarians reject it, it seems to them suspicious on the point in question: "Christians," they say , "who subsequently adopted the Gospel of St. John, perhaps made this apostle live. to decrepitude, in order to give some foundations to their opinion; but whether St. John has aged as they say, or whether he died younger, there is no appearance that he is the author of the Gospel attributed to him, and this work must have been composed more than one hundred years after the death of Jesus Christ. Their conjecture is based on the following reasons.

When we examine the Gospel of St. John with eyes other than those of faith, we perceive in this work such an extraordinary and so mysterious style, such singular ways of thinking, expressions so unusual among the Christians of then, dogmas so new, that one believes to be transported suddenly at the end of the second century of the Church. Let us read the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke, the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter and the other Apostles, even those of St. John as well as the Apocalypse which is under his name; the letters of St. Clément, of St. Barnabé, the Pastor of Hermas; that we go through in a word all the works which were done by Christians the first hundred years after the death of Jesus Christ, we will find no conformity, no relation of ideas with the Gospel of St. John .We hardly find the principles of Platonic dogma on theΑογος or the Eternal Word which the evangelist exposes in the greatest day. On the contrary, we then go on to the Christians who wrote at the end of the second century of the Church and in the third, St. John is no longer foreign to them, we recognize his style and his dogmas, Christianity is was then made disciples in the School of Plato, the Timaeus had become familiar to them, the co-eternal Word with God, of which the apostles had ignored even the name, no longer appears in their writings that the same person with the son of Mary, the Platonic theology grafted onto apostolic simplicity does only one and the same thing of the Son of Man and of the Word of God.

It is not only the dogma of the incarnation of the Word, unknown to all Christians of the first century, which makes the anti-Trinitarians refuse to recognize St. John as the author of the Gospel that is attributed to him, everything feels, they add, Platonism in this work, one notices there the obscure, enigmatic, diffuse style even, so used to the disciples of Plato, one only has to read the speech that Jesus Christ held at Nicodemus, at the Samaritan woman, and especially those he holds in this multitude that he had miraculously nourished: these are enigmas. They are so obscure that the most famous sects of Christianity still dispute today over the interpretation to be given to them. Entire Chapters 14, 15, 16 & 17 are of the same genre. Jesus Christ speaks to his disciples in the most abstract manner in the world;also the simple and coarse men did not understand anything: St. John who is of this number did not understand more than the others. His letters especially, his Apocalypse show that he has always remained in the same simplicity; but the author of the Gospel who used his name would easily have understood everything. The minds of the Christians were then more enlightened, the figures and the Platonic enigmas had become familiar to them.Platonic figures and riddles had become familiar to them.Platonic figures and riddles had become familiar to them.

Moreover, our critics do not deny that we do not find much Judaism in the Gospel of St. John; there is an extreme relation between the Judaic taste and the Platonic taste; what makes the difference is the multiplicity of figures. We only have to compare the parables of other evangelists with the riddles of St. John, and we will feel this difference. The Jews and the Platonists had drawn their taste for allegories from the same source; but these expressed themselves in a finer and more abstract way, whereas the others always stuck to simpler and lower images. Both tastes can be seen in St. John, there is a mixture of Platonism and Judaism that is not found in the writers of apostolic times:We know, moreover, that the Gospel which bears his name was written very late, it does not take more to make the anti-Trinitarians conclude that this Gospel is the work of a Jewish Platonist, who became a Christian in the time when Christianity entered the Platonic School, that is to say more than a hundred years after the death of Jesus Christ. More dangerous enemies for the Church that the anti-Trinitarians believe they perceive in the Gospel of St. John another mark of its novelty and its supposition. “Among the marvelous tales of the same thing,” say strong minds, “the last are usually the most astonishing and the most outraged, because the marvelous always increases as it recedes from its source. Experience has hardly ever denied this remark.When history and tradition would not teach us the order in which the Evangelists wrote, simply reading their works would teach us. »St. Matthew and St. Mark his copyist appear first; they fill their Gospels with accounts of the same miracles. St. Luke adds to this all the marvelous things that preceded the birth and accompanied the childhood of Jesus Christ. The first two say in general terms that Jesus Christ raised the dead, but in detail they only resuscitate one: moreover it seems that they fear that the miracle will appear too brilliant by the circumstances which 'they join. Jesus Christ locks himself up with three of his disciples and the father and mother of a young girl who had just died; after which he resuscitates it and strongly recommends that those present do not speak of it. St.Luke, on the contrary, makes him resuscitate in public a dead man who was carried in the ground. Those who were present in the convoy struck by this wonder returned, glorifying God and exalting the power of the great Prophet who had appeared among them. St. John goes even further on all this: the miracles of St. Matthew and St. Mark are child's play for his family. Saint Luke may well say that he was instructed exactly by those who from the beginning had been eyewitnesses; he can boast at the head ofMarc are only child's play with his family. Saint Luke may say that he was instructed exactly by those who from the beginning had been eyewitnesses; he can boast at the head ofMarc are only child's play with his family. Saint Luke may well say that he was instructed exactly by those who from the beginning had been eyewitnesses; he can boast at the head ofActs of the Apostlesthat he recounted in his Gospel all that Jesus Christ said and did that was miraculous; this well-informed evangelist ignored the miracles of Jesus Christ which had caused the most splendor, those which consequently should have been taught to him first and which were to leave the memory of men the last. Moses, Joshua, the Prophets had worked wonders and wonders without number; but since the world came into being, no one has heard that a man has restored sight to a born blind man. This is the testimony of this blind man himself to him who had healed him in such a brilliant way. We can see in the Gospel of St. John the noise that this miracle made in Jerusalem, and we will judge of the glory he acquired for the Son of God, by the envy and the rage that it stirred up in the heart of his enemies.Those among the Jews who were present at the resurrection of Lazarus seeing Jesus Christ be moved by the death of his friend, said (11) among themselves:hey what! he who opened the eyes of a born blind man could not prevent his friend from dying! so true is it that the hitherto unheard-of wonder had struck them more than all the other miracles of the Savior. But at the same time they were witnesses of another wonder which must have struck them more and which is without a doubt the most striking of all those found in the Gospel. You only have to compare the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus or that of the son of the Widow of Naim with the resurrection of Lazarus to feel how much the marvelous of this one is superior to the others.

Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days, already infected (12) and corrupted. Jesus Christ in the presence of all his disciples, of two sisters of the deceased, and of a large number of Jews, opens the tomb and cries out with a loud voice: Lazarus, come out, Lazare veni foras . Immediately this dead man, whose body already exhaled a cadaverous odor, gets up and leaves the tomb full of life and health. It was then that the enemies of Jesus Christ, fearing that he would triumph over their hatred, seriously decided to get rid of it. After such wonders, they said (13) If we do not get rid of this man everyone will believe in him .

The first miracle with which the Savior began his mission (14) must have made a strong impression on the minds of men, because newness in all things strikes and surprises. St. John is nevertheless the only evangelist who has preserved the memory. The astonishing healing of a man overwhelmed for 38 years with weakness and infirmity, who at the word of the Son of God loads his bed on his shoulders and leaves; in a word, the miracle and all the marvelousness of the Probatic Pool that accompanied it is only found in St. John. The glorious way in which the evangelist crowns his ministry to Jesus Christ responds perfectly to the marvelous with which he accompanied the rest of his life. He had to let himself be led to the slaughter like a lamb,but before surrendering himself into the hands of his enemies he gives one last and dazzling proof of his power: a word from his mouth throws backwards this troop of Satellites who had come to take him. St. Matthew is content to have Jesus Christ say on this occasion:Do you think that my Father would not send to my aid, if I wished, more than twelve legions of angels to defend me?His own power according to St. John is enough for him, his word alone defeats his enemies like a thunderbolt. Finally, St. John, who goes up against other evangelists, wanted, so to speak, to go even further on himself by this outraged hyperbole, which ends his Gospel. “Jesus Christ,” he says (15), “did many other things than those included in this volume, and if we undertook to bring them all back, I do not believe that the world could contain the books that are we would write about it. This is how this beloved apostle sustains to the end the tone he took at the beginning to celebrate his master. Before him the other evangelists had given us Jesus Christ only for a pure man, yet clothed with a supernatural power; St. John represents him to us as a God.Everything in his story had to respond to this lofty idea, he had to proportion the marvelous to the subtlety of dogmas.

It was established at the beginning of this work, that a witness to be believed, must appear well informed of the things he tells, and that he must besides that be sincere and judicious: if these three qualities are in the evangelists or historians of Jesus he is God, he is our Savior, his doctrine is the only one which leads to salvation; if, on the contrary, the evangelists appear deprived of these essential qualities to an irreproachable witness, the Christian religion is no more than a chimera and laymen are authorized in their unbelief.

Those who have provided their understanding to the faith are far from believing that one can think disadvantageously of the sacred Writers, they never doubted their enlightenment or their sincerity; they do not even suspect that one can form the slightest reasonable doubt on all of this. Libertinism, ignorance, and blindness seem to them the sharing of the unbeliever, it is to the faithful alone that they believe that virtue, science and enlightened reason are reserved. The proofs of the Christian religion can be seen in a great number of works which are in the hands of everyone; but as the reasons to the contrary are less well known, or because the apologists have ignored them or because they have rendered them badly, we do not hesitate to put them here in all their day. If these reasons are found weak,they will be despised and faith will not be hurt: if they appear specious, skilful people will perhaps not deem unworthy of them to refute them. Finally, those to whom they appear solid will not make it a crime for us to have exposed them. The Gospel comprises two things which both require special discussion, facts and dogmas. It is on this double foundation that the Christian edifice is erected, yet in such a way that one of these things is subordinate to the other. The dogmatic depends absolutely on the history of which it supposes the accuracy. Let us examine separately these two things which are the basis of the Christian faith: we will judge by this examination whether the Gospel deserves the belief of men and whether it is worthy of their respect.clever people may not find it unworthy of them to refute them. Finally, those to whom they appear solid will not make it a crime to have exposed them. The Gospel comprises two things which both require special discussion, facts and dogmas. It is on this double foundation that the Christian edifice is erected, yet in such a way that one of these things is subordinate to the other. The dogmatic depends absolutely on the history of which it supposes the accuracy. Let us examine separately these two things which are the basis of the Christian faith: we will judge by this examination whether the Gospel deserves the belief of men and whether it is worthy of their respect.clever people may not find it unworthy of them to refute them. Finally, those to whom they appear solid will not make it a crime for us to have exposed them. The Gospel comprises two things which both require special discussion, facts and dogmas. It is on this double foundation that the Christian edifice is erected, yet in such a way that one of these things is subordinate to the other. The dogmatic depends absolutely on the history of which it supposes the accuracy. Let us examine separately these two things which are the basis of the Christian faith: we will judge by this examination whether the Gospel deserves the belief of men and whether it is worthy of their respect.The Gospel comprises two things which both require special discussion, facts and dogmas. It is on this double foundation that the Christian edifice is erected, yet in such a way that one of these things is subordinate to the other. The dogmatic depends absolutely on the history of which it supposes the accuracy. Let us examine separately these two things which are the basis of the Christian faith: we will judge by this examination whether the Gospel deserves the belief of men and whether it is worthy of their respect.The Gospel comprises two things which both require special discussion, facts and dogmas. It is on this double foundation that the Christian edifice is erected, yet in such a way that one of these things is subordinate to the other. The dogmatic depends absolutely on the history of which it supposes the accuracy. Let us examine separately these two things which are the basis of the Christian faith: we will judge by this examination whether the Gospel deserves the belief of men and whether it is worthy of their respect.Let us examine separately these two things which are the basis of the Christian faith: we will judge by this examination whether the Gospel deserves the belief of men and whether it is worthy of their respect.Let us examine separately these two things which are the basis of the Christian faith: we will judge by this examination whether the Gospel deserves the belief of men and whether it is worthy of their respect.

Evangelical history teaches us that in the year 15 of Tiberius, that is to say several years after Judea had been reunited with the Roman Empire, there appeared in this Province a man named Jesus, son, to this that one believed, of a poor craftsman of the Bourg de Nazareth in Galilee. The birth of this man was completely divine: a Virgin daughter had brought him into the world; astonishing wonders had preceded and followed this marvelous birth. Jesus, after leading an obscure life in the house of his father, aged about 30, performs in public preaching austere new morals, announcing new dogmas, strongly declaiming against the abuses of the Pharisees who were then the dominant sect among the Jews. The new reformer supports and authorizes his doctrine with a host of miracles, each more striking than the next.He commands the winds and storms; he cures the most incurable diseases, he delivers the possessed, and restores sight to the born blind; he raises the dead; finally since he began to appear, every moment of his life has been marked by a miracle. A doctrine so well supported had attached to his person several disciples: however the Pharisees outraged by his invectives swear his downfall: they had him arrested as a seditious and condemned him to death by the Governor of Jerusalem. Jesus is crucified, he dies between two robbers like a robber himself; but on the third day he emerges from the tomb victorious over death and his enemies; he then shows himself several times to his disciples, finally he ascends to heaven in their presence forty days after his resurrection.he cures the most incurable diseases, he delivers the possessed, and restores sight to the born blind; he raises the dead; finally since he began to appear, every moment of his life has been marked by a miracle. A doctrine so well supported had attached to his person several disciples: however the Pharisees outraged by his invectives swear his destruction: they had him arrested as a seditious and condemned him to death by the Governor of Jerusalem. 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This is what the Gospel teaches us about Jesus Christ; but what is the Gospel, continue the unbelievers? This is what needs to be examined. The first Christians who appeared in the world were all Jews by birth and religion, that is to say, they all had their origin in a country where fanaticism had laid deep roots, and from the most contemptible in the eyes of men, although he believed himself dear in the eyes of God. Not to admit that the Jews were regarded as a nation of blind credulity and in which the love of the marvelous was, so to speak, innate, so much did it seem to constitute its principal character, would be to contradict all antiquity.

It was among the vilest and coarsest men of this nation that the first sectarians of Christianity were seen to appear; God, it is said, had chosen them on purpose to confuse the pride of the wise . But there is no question of resorting to mystery here; let us not deviate from the fact, since it is from it alone that this mystery must draw its source. Everything was simple, everything was crude, everything was low in the early Christians: the son of David was not himself in a more prosperous state than his apostles.

We therefore saw the appearance in Judea some time before the destruction of Jerusalem of a sect composed for the most part of the scum of the Jewish people. These men called themselves disciples of a named Jesus, who after having performed an incredible multitude of miracles during his life was resurrected after his death. First of all, they attracted several of their compatriots of the same condition and character to their party. Then they admire the uncircumcised in their sect; and as the Jews were spread by everyone and that this nation had then a great zeal to make proselytes, it seems that the new sectaries, in love with the same zeal, similarly made a rather considerable number of proselytes. There is nothing so far that the most scrupulous Christians cannot agree with. It will not be the same for the rest.

The Christian sect having proliferated, the leader of this sect became much more famous after his death than he had been during his life. We will soon see from the universal silence of the contemporaries of Jesus Christ, that this wonderful man did not make much noise while he was on earth; but his disciples did much there after his death. The number grew more and more, they zealously announced their new doctrine; they were treated as visionaries and fanatics, and they confirmed this opinion which they had of them by an invincible obstinacy in persisting in their sentiments, of which fanaticism continually furnished examples in all the sects established among the Jews. Jesus Christ therefore became more famous by his early followers than he had been by himself.The miracles of this pretended Messiah had in fact only the imagination of his disciples for their stage; whereas the fanaticism of the latter is really given to men as a spectacle. In the days immediately following the death of Jesus Christ, those who knew his doctrine spoke it out loud. It was through familiar conversations, speeches, exhortations that disciples were drawn to the Messiah. Some who had lived with him recounted what they had heard him say and what they thought they had seen. The others reported what they said they had learned from eyewitnesses; others giving in enthusiasm delivered with confidence what their imagination suggested to them.whereas the fanaticism of the latter is really given to men as a spectacle. In the days immediately following the death of Jesus Christ, those who knew his doctrine spoke it out loud. It was through familiar conversations, speeches, and exhortations that disciples were drawn to the Messiah. Some who had lived with him recounted what they had heard him say and what they thought they had seen. The others reported what they said they had learned from eyewitnesses; others giving in enthusiasm delivered with confidence what their imagination suggested to them.whereas the fanaticism of the latter is really given to men as a spectacle. In the days immediately following the death of Jesus Christ, those who knew his doctrine spoke it out loud. It was through familiar conversations, speeches, exhortations that disciples were drawn to the Messiah. Some who had lived with him recounted what they had heard him say and what they thought they had seen. The others reported what they said they had learned from eyewitnesses; others giving in enthusiasm delivered with confidence what their imagination suggested to them.by exhortations drawn from disciples to the Messiah. Some who had lived with him recounted what they had heard him say and what they thought they had seen. The others reported what they said they had learned from eyewitnesses; others giving in enthusiasm delivered with confidence what their imagination suggested to them.by exhortations drawn from disciples to the Messiah. Some who had lived with him recounted what they had heard him say and what they thought they had seen. The others reported what they said they had learned from eyewitnesses; others giving in enthusiasm delivered with confidence what their imagination suggested to them.

All the apostles, equally simple and equally zealous, increased the number of proselytes at will. These spoke with admiration of the miracles attributed to the head of the religion they had embraced, and the miracles were daily increasing as the number of brethren multiplied.

We see from the various Gospels which appeared a few years after, that the credulous spirit of the first Christians did not stay on this within any limits; but these stories did not appear in the days immediately following the death of Jesus Christ. Christianity, then too close to its source, still supported itself. The speeches of the apostles or their disciples were for the faithful a living Gospel which was sufficient for them. In the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul that we have, which are for the most part very long and some of which were written very late, nor in the other letters which remain to us from the apostles, there is nowhere mention of no written Gospel: this term which is encountered several times in their works signifies nothing other than the doctrine of Jesus Christ which they had announced;in a word, it is impossible to prove that no evangelical history was published before the destruction of Jerusalem: on the contrary, the ruin of this city and of its temple so clearly announced in St. Matthew and in St. Luke will always make people feel minds without prejudice that the Gospels were not written until after the event. However, Christianity moving away from its source, and the number of the faithful increasing day by day, it was necessary to resort to historical monuments to preserve the memory of the words and actions of the Messiah. So we saw appear in various places this crowd of little works that the Christians calledMatthew and in St. Luke will always make unprejudiced spirits feel that the Gospels were not written until after the event. However, Christianity moving away from its source, and the number of the faithful increasing day by day, it was necessary to resort to historical monuments to preserve the memory of the words and actions of the Messiah. So we saw appear in various places this crowd of little works that the Christians calledMatthew and in St. Luke will always make unprejudiced spirits feel that the Gospels were not written until after the event. However, Christianity moving away from its source, and the number of the faithful increasing day by day, it was necessary to resort to historical monuments to preserve the memory of the words and actions of the Messiah. So we saw appear in various places this crowd of little works that the Christians calledSo we saw appear in various places this crowd of little works that the Christians calledSo we saw appear in various places this crowd of little works that the Christians calledGospels because they contained the doctrine of salvation to which they already gave this name.

Most of the apostles must have been dead when the Gospels appeared; but it was not believed that these stories could be rendered more commendable than by attributing them to men so famous in Christianity, whose names should be known to all the faithful. Not to repeat what has been said above, it was not until 150 years after the death of Jesus Christ that the Church, coming out of the cradle and leaving the stammering of childhood, was ashamed of this multitude of stories evangelicals and adopted only four more reasonable and more consistent among themselves than the others; and this is what is called today the Gospel .

But, continue the incredulous, where do we know that these four privileged stories are the only legitimate ones? How has it been possible to disentangle, for example, that the Gospel which we have under the name of St. Matthew was truly his, and that that of the Hebrews and another which the Ebionites used were not? although they were all three under the name of the same evangelist, and all three of equal antiquity? Why was the Gospel of Childhood attributed to St. Thomas, as well as that of St. James, and so many others which are equally ancient works, rejected? Why did you prefer the Gospel of St. John, which bears the most sensitive marks of supposition? Was this author to be believed because he is named at the end of his story? St. Matthew, St. Mark, or St. Luke did not use it like this,and unfortunately for St. John this assignment is common to him with the apocryphal evangelists. St. James, St. Thomas, Nicodemus declare themselves in the same way, to authorize Gospels which bear their names. As the Christians subsequently suppressed, as far as they could, the rejected Gospels, few of these works have come down to us; but if we judge by those who remain to us, we are forced to admit that the most absurd and extravagant marvelous had then taken hold of their imagination; The Church wisely used it to have proscribed stories in which the Messiah in his childhood amused himself by making little earth birds which flew away after being animated by his breath.The faithful would no doubt have been shocked to see their master change little boys into goats to teach them how to be wise. No dignity would have been found in the miracle that the baby Jesus did to enlarge the throne of the king of Jerusalem: St. Joseph had been charged to make this throne, but not having taken his measures well, the throne was found. too narrow for the place where it was to be placed: whereupon the little Messiah began to pull the work on one side, and St. Joseph to pull on the other, after which the throne was found just for the place.on this the little Messiah begins to pull the work on one side, and St. Joseph to pull on the other, after which the throne is found just for the place.on this the little Messiah begins to pull the work on one side, and St. Joseph to pull on the other, after which the throne is found just for the place.

The Gospel of St. James hardly makes more sense. All the marvelous peculiarities of St. Joseph's marriage are described in a ridiculous manner, and Salome's unbelief on the delivery of the Virgin is assuredly carried so far there that it scandalizes. The work that we have under the name of the Gospel of Nicodemus is perhaps nothing else than the famous Acts of Pilate cited as authentic by the ancient Fathers of the Church, by St. Justin, Tertullian, Eusebius, etc.

However, this Gospel is filled with a wonderful childish and inept. Such works rightly deserve to be treated as apocryphal: in our Gospels things are done with more decorum, the Messiah acts there with more dignity, the marvelous is no less outraged, but it is better. chosen and nobler.

All these works that the Church has repudiated have been rejected only for their too low simplicity, or perhaps because of some particular dogmas which did not prevail and which Christians have disavowed, or finally because of the excess little conformity between them; however they are old, they are also one of those evangelical stories that saw the birth of the century which followed the destruction of Jerusalem. The Canonical Gospels do not have any more antiquity, but they have for them the adoption of the Church: the other Gospels, it is said, were supposed by impostors or by heretics, as if the Orthodox had been on that more reserved. We must have no tint of ecclesiastical history to ignore that men have never pushed the deceit and the imposture further,that all Christians without exception did so in the first place in favor of their sect. Finally, it will never be proved that no Gospel was written before the capture of Jerusalem. Subsequently, under this title, a number of fabulous stories appeared that were falsely attributed to the apostles: the Christians who made them were avowed fanatics whose zeal made them impostors; and the four Gospels chosen by the Church are among these works.and the four Gospels chosen by the Church are among these works.and the four Gospels chosen by the Church are among these works.

But, it will be said, even if it would be doubtful that the canonical Gospels were really composed by the authors whose names they bear, it is at least certain that Christianity existed before the ruin of Jerusalem; unbelievers agree that St. Paul and the other Apostles had written before that time, one cannot doubt that there were Christians in Rome under the Empire of Nero and even under that of Claudius; Suetonius and Tacitus (16) say so positively. So there was therefore a sect of men who believed that Jesus Christ was resurrected. So all that we have just said does not destroy the fact and can only harm the authenticity of the Gospels that the unbelievers have claimed to attack until now:they wanted to make known the idea which can have of a work so revered by Christians, a spirit which prefers the lights of reason to the lights of faith. But let us listen to their reasoning to the end: let us see how they claim to reverse a fact which they believe has already been shaken; they may not yet have said anything more than the weakest they had to say about it.

There was certainly in Judea, Greece, Italy, a sect of men who recognized as their master Jesus Christ crucified and risen; and this sect was composed, as has been said, of miserable Jews, of poor fanatics, still more miserable by the character of their minds than by the baseness of their condition. In the early days Christianity was still so obscure that the name was hardly known. As the Christians were almost all Jews, as their religion was founded on Judaism, and as all the disputes about the Messiah took place with other disciples of Moses, they were always confused with the Jews; they were regarded as one of those particular sects which so frequently issued from the bosom of this superstitious nation.Now the reasonable men who lived then had of the Jewish nation an idea of ​​contempt to which it would have been difficult to add anything. We have already said it several times, and we cannot repeat it too often: it is a people, it was constantly said, who inhabit the land of fables, everything is done with them by enchantment.

If reasonable men had known what was at stake in the disputes of the Jews with the Christians, they would doubtless have deplored the miserable human condition which fanaticism delivers up to the most extravagant credulity. Sensible minds naturally dislike the absurd, they do not like to go into chimeras. Let us suppose, however, that a judicious man would have wanted to clarify the essential point of the dispute which subsisted between the disciples of Moses and those of Jesus Christ. When, for example, the Emperor Claudius drove the Jews from Rome, Suetonius said "that he drove them out because of the continual rumors they excited about a certain Christus." This passage, which is not too clear, shows that Suetonius himself was not yet up to date, although he lived a century after Jesus Christ,but that is not what it is about here. Suppose therefore that in Claudius's time, a sane and curious man, a philosopher wanted to know what it was about. First he addresses the Jews who tell him: a sect of miserable and foolish people has just arisen among us, who want to pass off as Messiah an impostor, a seditious that Pilate had crucified in Jerusalem. The same man then addresses the Christians: yes, they say to him, Jesus Christ was crucified as a seditious, but he was a divine man, a man whose almost all actions were miracles: he delivered the possessed, he raised up the lame, he restored sight to the born blind, he raised the dead, he raised himself, and he ascended into Heaven in body and soul; many of our brothers have seen him,all Judea witnessed his wonders and his miraculous life.

How? 'Or' What ! said our philosopher about this, is all Judea then Christian? So all the inhabitants of a country who have witnessed so many wonders have embraced your Master's doctrine? Alas! no, reply the Christians, there were only a very few who did so, compared to the rest. All the others had eyes and did not see, ears and did not hear. Ha! said the Philosopher a little recovered from his surprise, I see what it is, I recognize the enchantments so ordinary to those of your nation. But speak to me sincerely, did things go as you say? Were the miracles of your Messiah actually public? They were, they resume, they erupted in full view of the public. Whatever illness we had, anyone who couldonly touching the hem of his robe as he passed was sure to be healed. Several times he fed five to six thousand people with what would have barely been enough to feed five or six. Without speaking to you of an infinity of miracles that he performed in public, one day he resuscitated at the gate of a city a dead man who was carried to the ground; another time in the presence of a large number of people he resuscitated one who had been buried for four days and more than half rotten. Ho! for this last miracle, says the philosopher, I am convinced that all those who attended bowed at the feet of the Messiah: there were also many who believed in him, answers one of the Christians, but all did not do it; the others immediately went to tell the Pharisees, who were the enemies of our Master, everything they had seen.It is the same, he continues, with the other miracles of Jesus Christ, some of those who witnessed them believed in him, because he had intended them to be among his disciples; the others did not believe it. In truth, said the philosopher to them, there must be a great deal of simplicity in some and extreme stupidity in others. I can easily imagine, and your example confirms me in this thought, I understand that it is possible to meet people simple enough to imagine that they have seen miracles when they did not see any; but it will never be conceived that there can be enough dazed not to surrender to wonders as brilliant as those of which you have just spoken. It must be admitted that Judea produces men who are nothing like other men on earth:we see in you what we do not see elsewhere. Our philosopher therefore admires the credulity of these good people who seem to him fanatics of the first order. But wanting to fully satisfy his curiosity, he conceals his true feelings and says to these Christians: what I have just heard seems to me so wonderful, so strange, so new, that I would have an extreme desire to know everything more thoroughly. which concerns your Messiah: you will please me to inform me of it; such a divine man certainly deserves the whole universe to inquire into the smallest circumstances of his life. Immediately one of the troop, perhaps flattering himself that he is making a proselyte of the philosopher, begins to recount in detail all that concerns Jesus Christ: how he was born of a Virgin;how the Magi and Pastors had come to recognize his Divinity in the cradle; the miracles of his childhood, those of his last years, his life, his death, his resurrection, nothing was forgotten. The evangelist does not stop at the actions of the Son of Man, he reports all his speeches, all his parables, all his morals. Finally the instruction is complete, it omits nothing either on the facts or on the dogmas. When the Christian has ceased to speak, the philosopher, who without interrupting him had listened to everything with great attention and patience, speaks in his turn, but in a way that will soon make known to the disciples of Jesus Christ that 'he was not prepared to increase the number. The morality of your Messiah, he said, seems to me good in certain respects,I find it in some places consistent with that taught by all reasonable men who appeared on earth more than 400 years before him. This morality, which you are chanting as news, is perhaps for a rude and foolish people like the Jews, but it is not for the rest of men. I nevertheless find one thing to be criticized in this morality, it is that the one who taught it was not a simpler and more common man in his actions; it is a pity that your master, who thought so well about the regulation of morals, has done so many wonders.I nevertheless find one thing to be criticized in this morality, it is that the one who taught it was not a man simpler and more common in his actions; it is a pity that your master, who thought so well about the regulation of morals, has done so many wonders.I nevertheless find one thing to be criticized in this morality, it is that the one who taught it was not a simpler and more common man in his actions; it is a pity that your master, who thought so well about the regulation of morals, has done so many wonders.

But if the moral of the Messiah is not new, he continues, I admit with astonishment that his miracles are for me: they should not be, however, neither for me nor for anyone, yet no one is. is instructed: it is a very short time, you say, that Jesus Christ lived: all men of a reasonable age who are on earth today were his contemporaries. Can you imagine in good faith that in a Province of the Empire as frequented as Palestine, such extraordinary things could have happened, and that for an interval of three to four years in a row, without anyone having heard of it? say the slightest word? We have a Governor and a large garrison in Jerusalem, Judea is full of Romans; commerce is continuous from Rome to Joppa, and it was not known in that country that Jesus Christ was in the world!

The Jews have the faculty to see or not to see wonders as they please, continues the philosopher, but the other men usually see what is in front of their eyes and see only that. When you tell me that our soldiers were witnesses of the miracles which happened at the death and resurrection of your Master, of this earthquake, of this thick darkness which darkened the sunlight for three hours; when you represent them as almost dead with fear and shock at the appearance of an angel coming down from heaven with the sound and the brightness of thunder to open the tomb of Christ; when at last you assure that the same soldiers disavowed for a base interest miracles which had struck them so much that they were almost to death of fear, you forget in truth that they are men,you metamorphose them into Jews, as if the air of Judea fascinated the eyes and overturned the reason of all the foreigners who breathe it.

Believe, Christians, that if your Messiah had really done the least part of the miracles you attribute to him, the Emperor, the Senate, all of Rome would have been informed. This divine man would have been the subject of all our conversations and the object of universal admiration. However, he is still unknown to everyone, except perhaps a small number of Jews, even most of whom regard him as an impostor. Conceive at least, O Christians, that it took a miracle stronger than all the miracles of Jesus Christ put together to thus keep captive in obscurity a story which you suppose to be as public, as brilliant and as wonderful as his. Acknowledge your error, let go of a chimerical opinion.After all, it is to your imagination alone that Jesus Christ is indebted for all that marvelous with which you adorn his history. Christians who in the early days had not yet thought of fabricating the false Acts of Pilate, nor the letters from this Governor to Tiberius; who had not yet thought of setting up a trade in letters between St. Paul and Seneca; who had not yet assumed all the prophecies of the Sibyls, where the miracles, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are announced as clearly as in the Gospel; Christians, in a word, who had not yet joined the imposture to fanaticism, were for some time banned from the speech of the philosopher. Finally the one among them who had first performed the function of evangelist, then taking the tone of an enthusiastic;Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he cried, he is our Messiah, our Savior, our King. We know he's dead, he's risen; happy those who have seen and who have believed! happier still those who will believe in him without having seen him! O Rome! renounce your unbelief! Superb Babylon! do penance for your disorders; time is short, the fall is near, your Empire is coming to an end: what am I saying! your Empire, the whole universe will change shape. The Son of Man will come in the clouds to judge the living and the dead; he comes, he is at the door: The world will disappear; many of those who live today will not die until all these things are accomplished. Here we end our guess.The philosopher who did not take great pleasure in this language takes leave of the Christian troop and lets the enthusiast harangue his brothers as much as he likes.

The brilliant wonders of Jesus Christ had caused so little sensation in the world, that many years after his death his name was scarcely known, and his disciples were not distinguished from those of Moses. It is a fact that cannot be questioned without denying all the monuments that remain to us from those times. Let us now see if in Judea, which was the scene of his wonderful life, his prestige shone more clearly. It is by the testimony of contemporary Jews that we must judge. Let's start with the evangelists themselves, examine in their own accounts the different ideas that the Jews had of the miracles that the Messiah performed among them. Then we'll move on to stronger and more compelling testimonials.

If a lively and ardent faith is necessary to work miracles, it is at least by a simple faith and a supplied spirit that one can put oneself in a position to see them: there are only those who are persuaded of the possibility of miracles which can be witnesses of it; the marvelous flees and fears the unbelieving spirit, it is its most dangerous enemy. Simple men have seen wonders, they will always see them; unbelievers have not seen it and will never see it.

After what the evangelists tell us about the authenticity of the miracles of Jesus Christ, after what we have said and repeated so often about the credulity of the Jews, we will no doubt be surprised to find unbelievers among them. There were, however, and in large numbers. The Pharisees, the doctors of the Law, the priests, all the principal people of the people were species of strong spirits compared to the rest of the nation: at least that is the idea given to us by the evangelists. In truth, this idea is not always well supported in their writings; for when these same strong spirits attribute the exorcisms of Jesus Christ to the power of Beelzebub, or when we hear them say: If we do not get rid of this man, all the people will believe in him because of the wonders that he did, they seem to reason then as if they assumed the reality of his wonders; but in spite of this contrariety which reigns in the evangelical stories on the point in question, it nevertheless results from the whole reading of the Gospels that the Pharisees, the priests, the scholars, all the principal of the Jewish nation were so many unbelievers , who did not want to put faith in the miracles reported to them from the Messiah.

Who believed in him, they say to the man born blind? There isn't a single one of us who has done it. There is only this vile mob of ignorant and foolish men. Without reporting other testimonies of their unbelief which are in great number in the Gospels, the strongest proof that we can give is this request so eager and so often repeated that they made to the Messiah to show them a prodigy. Jesus Christ did nothing but wonders, since all of his actions were miracles. A little patience, or rather a little faith; and soon instead of a miracle he would have shown these unbelievers a great number. But a curiosity based on doubt is too bad a disposition to see miracles;Jesus Christ never did it before witnesses in whom he noticed this arrangement; the desire of the Pharisees and others who lacked faith was never satisfied, the Messiah consistently refused to do any wonders in their presence.

Herod the Tetrarch had no reason to be happier than the Pharisees. This Prince, say the evangelists, having often heard of the miracles of Jesus Christ, was delighted that Pilate referred to him such a marvelous man: he hoped to see him confirm by some miracle the truth of the marvelous tales he had heard told. from him. But the Messiah stood in inaction. Herod, whatever desire he might have, did not see him do any miracles, which caused the Tetrarch and all his court to turn their curiosity into contempt for him.

It seems first of all that the parents of Jesus Christ should have been the first to believe in him, however the Gospel tells us formally and in more than one place that they did not believe in it: they believed in it so little that they formed the plan to seize him and lock him up, looking at this new Messiah like a madman. It is faith alone which sustains the marvelous; faith is always accompanied by a mysterious respect: but one must never know in depth or see too closely the things which must be respected.

The great proximity, the too much familiarity which sometimes gives rise to contempt, are always at least an obstacle to the respect without which faith cannot work. No wonder, then, that the parents of Jesus Christ were unbelieving his miracles. This Messiah was too well known to them, he had always seemed to them too common a man, for him to suddenly become so respectable; for that it would have been necessary to overturn all their ideas; it was to strangers to whom Jesus Christ was unknown to form such ideas of him as they pleased; it was up to them to believe in him and to regard him as the Messiah; for his parents, they knew what to expect on his account; his birth, so wonderful, had not struck them; they had never heard of his so-called prodigies;and indeed it was only after his death that the brains of the first Christians gave birth to all this marvelous. The unbelief of the inhabitants of Nazareth was founded on the same principle: a great familiarity had similarly stifled the germ of faith in them. There is nothing so naive as the way it is recorded in the Gospel. The Messiah having gone to Nazareth where he had spent thirty years of his life exercising his father's profession, the inhabitants first said among themselves: "is not he (17) the son of Joseph and Mary?" His father, his mother, his brothers, his sisters are not they still with us? By what adventure then did he become a prophet? Jesus Christ told them about it; you will undoubtedly apply the proverb to me: Doctor, heal yourself;do as many miracles here as you have done in other places. Your bad disposition persuades me of the truth of another proverb, which is, that no one is a prophet in his country: and indeed, add the evangelists "except some sick that he heals by laying his hands on them, he saw that he could not perform any miracles in this place because of the unbelief of his compatriots. "(18)

The Nazarenes even took the lack of faith a step further; for Jesus Christ having reproached them with some strong enough reproach, they led the Messiah up a mountain on which their city was built, in order to throw him down, but he escaped from their hands. Finally, all those who witnessed the miracles of Jesus Christ must be placed among the unbelievers of the Gospel, without nevertheless believing in him; and the number of the latter is prodigious since it generally includes all the Jewish people. After seeing the Messiah followed by several thousand people who seemed to attach themselves to him to the point of neglecting the care of their own food; after the triumph which the Jews awarded him on his entry into Jerusalem a few days before his death; after the amazing wonders he did during his life,and especially those which he shattered while dying, of which the evangelists make all the people witness; one is quite surprised to see the small number of his true disciples to whom he sent the consoling Spirit which he had promised them. This strange blindness of an entire nation hardly seems probable, it is true, but it is permissible to deny the Gospel in favor of verisimilitude: secular writers give the Jews for a people entirely credulous and lover of the marvelous, the evangelists us give an idea still below; they represent them to us as real brutes devoid of all judgment and reason. You follow me, says Jesus Christ, speaking to this multitude which he feeds in the desert, as if he had spoken to a multitude of beasts, not because of the miracles which you have seen,but because of the bread I gave you to eat. Everything is consistent with that in the Gospel. These were the people who followed the Messiah: these are the men before whom he worked his wonders.

It was said above that it was impossible to conceive of the little noise that the miracles of Jesus Christ had made in the world, despite the splendor with which they appear to be clothed in the Gospel. Without having recourse to another miracle, one is still obliged to have recourse to it to save the perpetual contrast of the brilliance of his wonders with the unbelief of the Jews who witnessed them. Indeed all this happened thus according to the evangelists (19) so that the prophecy of Isaiah might be fulfilled; they will look and will not see, they will listen and will not hear. The prophecy certainly had its effect in the time of the Messiah, the Jews ceased to be men, they became trees. It must also be admitted that the evangelical history represents this people to us as a very particular species of men who literally did not see with their eyes and did not hear with their ears, who did not think and did not feel like the others. men. In short, the Jews appear so unnaturally stupid that faith alone can make them look like men who could have really existed.

Since the miracles of the Messiah had made so little impression on the minds of the Jews at the very time they were witnesses to them, it will not be surprising to see them absolutely lose their memory. They lost in fact the memory not only of all the miracles they had seen, but also of the wonderful man who had performed them: apart from the small number of those who had embraced his doctrine, his very name became unknown to all. rest of the Jewish nation; but let us leave the evangelists and their systems; let us no longer submit to the idea that they give us of their own nation, let us explain ourselves in an independent manner, and show by the silence of the contemporary Jews of Jesus Christ that his miracles had made so little shine in Judea than in the rest of the earth.

Although the Jews were generally regarded as an imbecile nation, there were nevertheless among them men who knew by a particular merit to distinguish themselves from their compatriots: the famous Philo is one of the latter; the School of Plato hardly raised disciples who did so much honor to his master as he. This Jewish philosopher was living in Alexandria at the same time that Jesus Christ and his apostles appeared in Judea. The city of Alexandria was filled with a great number of Jews who had a continual trade with those of Jerusalem from which they were not very distant. What had happened of considerable in this capital of Judaism was soon to spread in all the places of the kingdom where the Jews were accustomed; the inhabitants of Egypt were to be the first to learn about it: however Philo,learned man, curious, philosopher, very attached to his religion, who composed an infinity of works of morality, of facts, of reasoning, Philo, I say, never made any mention neither of Jesus Christ nor of his miracles or his doctrine. The very name of Christians or their Master has never come to him, and those who claim that he spoke of the early Christians under the name ofTherapists just don't deserve to be brought back from their ridiculous prevention.

Joseph and the Righteous of Tiberias were distinguished among the Jews by the histories of their nations which they both wrote at the same time. They both lived in the same country where Jesus Christ had miraculously finished His life. The disciples of the Messiah who, it is said, performed greater miracles than their Master, were fellow citizens and contemporaries of these two historians. Righteous and Joseph must have heard nothing more than the wonders of this Man-God who had risen gloriously, after having, in the sight of all the people, darkened the sky and made the earth tremble while dying; still less could they ignore the miracles of the apostles and the first Christians, since they lived with them:at least they must have known the name of this new sect of which God was then seconding the establishment by all the gifts of his spirit and by the brilliant virtue of his arm. But no, these two historians ignored all these things, the miracles of Jesus Christ, those of his disciples, the name of the new Messiah, the very sect of Christians; all this is also unknown to them. Righteous of Tiberias had composed a history of his nation from Moses to his time: This work has not come down to us, but the learned Photius who read it formally assures us that the author made no mention neither of Jesus Christ, nor of his miracles, nor of his sect. Joseph, who contradicts the story of Righteous in several things, nevertheless agrees with him in the silence he observes with regard to Jesus Christ and his followers.

Although this historian knows how to enter into infinite detail of all somewhat considerable events, although he speaks of all the sects which subsisted before him, and which had been formed among the Jews; although he mentions several impostors, or famous fanatics who had undertaken to establish new ones, and who had failed in their undertakings; Christians and their Messiah, however, escaped him; the miracles of Jesus Christ, whose brilliance increased as they drew away from their source, were still too recent to be known to Joseph. Christianity at that time made too little of a figure among the Jews to be placed among the sects.

The historian has not forgotten the famous Galilean Judah who was the prince and the teacher of the sect of the Sicarii. The fanatic Jonathas, followed on the Mount of Olives by thirty thousand other fanatics, found a place in his history as well as Theudas the new Joshua, who led the foolish populace to the banks of the Jordan, assuring them that he would make them pass this river on dry ground. This other fanatic who under Pilate's government cost the lives of so many credulous Samaritans has not escaped him. But the Prince of the Christian sect did not seem to him worthy of being placed in the ranks of these illustrious and famous men. If Joseph knew Jesus Christ he did not deign to mention it, and he doubtless confused him in the crowd of these deceitful and visionaries who then arose in Judea and of whom he speaks only in general. , of those false prophets, who, as he says,were followed by a stupid people under the pretext of the imaginary prodigies which they promised to make them see.

What is singular and at the same time humiliating for Christians is that Joseph considered the forerunner of the Messiah more worthy of mention than the Messiah himself. He speaks honorably of John the Baptist: he was a pious man, he says, who exhorted the Jews to virtue, recommending them to join the purity of the body to that of the soul; and as he was always followed by a great crowd of people, Herod fearing that he might arouse some sedition by the power which he had over this multitude, had him arrested and sent him prisoner in the castle of Machera. The Jews, he adds, attributed the defeat of this prince by the Arabs to a chastisement from heaven for such an unjust action. The evangelists, as we know, attributed (20) the imprisonment of St.John for the reproaches he made to Herod about his illegitimate marriage with his brother's wife. They even say (21) that Herodias' daughter asked for John's head and obtained from Herod that it be cut for her in the prison. Joseph said neither, yet this was the opportunity to do so. As regards the quality of precursor of the Messiah which the Christians gave to John in order to raise up their master, we will see below that it is an imagination without any foundation.we will see later that it is an imagination without any foundation.we will see in what follows that it is an imagination without any foundation.

The Jewish historian speaks of James whom the high priest Ananias stoned with a few others, accusing them of having violated the faith, and this action, he says, extremely displeased all those who had piety. Joseph stops there and says no more; one has only to see Eusebius and the others after him, one will find there that Joseph attributes the ruin of Jerusalem to a divine punishment for the death of St. James. The same Christians who at the end of the third century inserted the passage of Jesus Christ free of charge in the history of Joseph undoubtedly added after the word James these other words: brother of Jesus named Christ. This little imperceptible deceit seems a continuation dependent on the other. As for the famous passage on Jesus Christ, this point of criticism has been discussed so well by so many able people that it is useless to repeat on this what they have already said. It is a roughly stitched passage that interrupts all the meaning: let it be taken away, order and reason are found first: it is in itself absurd in that it makes Joseph say that Jesus- Christ was the Christ predicted and announced by the prophets, that he was more than a man, so admirable were his works! that he was resurrected on the third day after death and that he appeared alive to his disciples. In a word, he makes the historian speak like an evangelist, and that is absurdity even in such a zealous Jew, such a declared Pharisee,a man as far removed from Christianity as Joseph was. Besides this, this passage was unknown for more than two hundred years to all the apologists of the Christian religion, and to all the Fathers of the first times, many of whom even positively assured that Joseph had never known Jesus Christ. Finally, the imposture of the Christians is so obvious as regards assuming without any modesty all kinds of works favorable to their sect, that it would be enough to decide the thing.Finally, the imposture of the Christians is so obvious as regards assuming without any modesty all kinds of works favorable to their sect, that it would be enough to decide the thing.Finally, the imposture of the Christians is so obvious as regards assuming without any modesty all kinds of works favorable to their sect, that it would be enough to decide the thing.

But deceitful people don't always hear their own interests; for wanting too much, they often get nothing. Two lines added to the story of Joseph in another place would perhaps have done more service to the Christian religion than the whole passage which everyone feels the supposition. It is to the cruelties of Herod so accurately described by the Jewish historian that we must add the massacre of the children of Bethlehem, of which he has not said a single word. “After the birth of Jesus Christ,” says (22) the Gospel, “Magi from the East came to Jerusalem and asked where is the King of the Jews who was recently born? for we have seen his star in the east, and have come to bow down to him. When King Herod heard of this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.This prince having then learned from the doctors of the Law that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, sent the Magi there, assuring them that he would soon go and bow himself before the new King. The Magi therefore set out on their way, led by the star they had already seen in the East and which appeared to them again. They arrived in Bethlehem, found the child there with Mary his mother; then having opened their treasures, they offered him gold, frankincense, and myrrh as a present, and returned home without seeing Herod again. Thereupon this prince became enraged and sent to slaughter all the children who were in the territory of Bethlehem aged two years and below. This is the fact as it is recorded in the Gospel. Let us stop for a moment to consider it.assuring them that he would soon go and bow down himself before the new King. The Magi therefore set out on their way, led by the star they had already seen in the East and which appeared to them again. They arrived in Bethlehem, found the child there with Mary his mother; then having opened their treasures, they offered him gold, frankincense, and myrrh as a present, and returned home without seeing Herod again. Thereupon this prince became enraged and sent to slaughter all the children who were in the territory of Bethlehem aged two years and below. This is the fact as it is recorded in the Gospel. Let us stop for a moment to examine it.assuring them that he would soon go and bow down himself before the new King. The Magi therefore set out on their way, led by the star they had already seen in the East and which appeared to them again. They arrived in Bethlehem, found the child there with Mary his mother; then having opened their treasures, they offered him gold, frankincense, and myrrh as a present, and returned home without seeing Herod again. Thereupon this prince became enraged and sent to slaughter all the children who were in the territory of Bethlehem aged two years and below. This is the fact as it is recorded in the Gospel. Let us stop for a moment to examine it.They arrived in Bethlehem, found the child there with Mary his mother; then having opened their treasures, they offered him gold, frankincense, and myrrh as a present, and returned home without seeing Herod again. Thereupon this prince became enraged and sent to slaughter all the children who were in the territory of Bethlehem aged two years and below. This is the fact as it is recorded in the Gospel. Let us stop for a moment to examine it.They arrived in Bethlehem, found the child there with Mary his mother; then having opened their treasures, they offered him gold, frankincense, and myrrh as a present, and returned home without seeing Herod again. Thereupon this prince became enraged and sent to slaughter all the children who were in the territory of Bethlehem aged two years and below. This is the fact as it is recorded in the Gospel. Let us stop for a moment to examine it.This is the fact as it is recorded in the Gospel. Let us stop for a moment to examine it.This is the fact as it is recorded in the Gospel. Let us stop for a moment to consider it.

We have seen above that a fact so considerable which had confused the whole city of Jerusalem and the whole land of Bethlehem in tears, was nevertheless unknown to St. Luke, although he particularly applied himself to describing all these peculiarities. of the Messiah's childhood. This evangelist speaks neither of Herod, nor of the Magi, nor of Jesus' flight into Egypt, nor of his return from Egypt to Nazareth, and we must remember the reason we have given which is that St. Luke gives birth to Jesus Christ ten years after the death of Herod; otherwise it would be absurd to imagine that such an important fact could have escaped him, or that he would have neglected to include it in his Gospel, if he had come to his knowledge or if he had believed it to be true, since he reports in accordance with St. Matthew an infinity of other things much less important.

But regardless of the silence of St. Luke, setting aside the respect due to the Holy Spirit and then examining the story of the Magi, we will certainly not find anything that looks more like a fable than this evangelical history. The evangelist who reports it seems to give in the most popular opinions on judicial astrology and on dreams. These Magi had the reputation of being very skilled in astrology, they saw all the events in the stars; it is a star which announced to them the birth of the Messiah, and as the marvelous is always increasing, a historian of the second century assures that this star effaced by its brightness the light of the sun and of the moon. This is not all, to say nothing of the other dreams which are in the Gospel of St. Matthew, this story alone presents three of them.Joseph is warned in the first of these dreams to flee to Egypt; in the second, it is the Magi to whom Heaven gives notice to return home without seeing Herod; and in the third God commands Joseph to return to Judea. Finally the journey of these pagan astrologers who come in cold blood from the East to worship a little King of the Jews with whom they have no need, and this because they saw his star in the sky, this journey, say I, seem such a childish and simple thing that one needs to resort to mystery to save their ridicule: they were, it is said, the omen of the worship of the Gentiles.Finally the journey of these pagan astrologers who come in cold blood from the East to worship a little King of the Jews whom they do not care about, and this because they saw his star in the sky, this journey, say I, seem such a childish and simple thing that one needs to have recourse to mystery to save their ridicule: they were, it is said, the omen of the worship of the Gentiles.Finally the journey of these pagan astrologers who come in cold blood from the East to worship a little King of the Jews with whom they have no need, and this because they saw his star in the sky, this journey, say I, seem such a childish and simple thing that one needs to have recourse to mystery to save their ridicule: they were, it is said, the omen of the worship of the Gentiles.

Joseph's silence on the massacre of the children of Bethlehem is, however, more difficult to explain than the ridiculous journey of astrologers from the East. In fact, there is no mystery which can explain how such an exact and educated historian could have forgotten this important fact; one cannot enter into greater detail than he on the distrust, the tyrannies, the cruelties of Herod; he extended the barbarity of this prince beyond his life by the cruel order which he made him give while dying. Joseph perhaps pushed the matter too far by the horror which remained in the hearts of the Jews for the memory of a tyrant who had long oppressed them; however he forgets the action of this most inhuman tyrant,the one which must have inspired the most horror for him during his life and which must have made his memory the most hateful after his death.

On the other hand, he omits a point of history so marked and so considerable in the life of Herod, which is the birth of an extraordinary child for whom Heaven seemed to have intended the crown of the Jews, for whom philosophers guided by a miraculous star come expressly to pay homage to Bethlehem, after having stirred up the whole city of Jerusalem by their speech and having kindled in the king's heart a jealousy which leads him to commit the most barbarous action in the world.

Such a point of history in the life of King Busiris would not have escaped his historian, and it is supposed that it escaped Joseph in the life of Herod of which he was a contemporary layman! It is thus that by discussing all things with an exact criticism one manages to clarify a fact; it is thus that by examining with attention the fundamental point of the Christian faith which is the historical fact of the Gospel, we finally come to know it; or rather it is thus that by wishing to go into this fact further, we see it absolutely disappear and no longer exist except in the imagination of Christians. It seems that Christianity was in its origin and in its progress what a great river is: see this one in its force or in its greatest breadth, it rolls its abundant waters with majesty,we do not imagine that it must be elsewhere different from what we see; but go back to its source, you will hardly find a stream whose grasses hide from us the sight: the inhabitants of the country who see it being born often do not know it in the ignorance where they are that this stream becomes in the continuation a famous river , his present mediocrity prevents them from paying attention.

It is the same with Christianity; if one considers it in its splendor, nothing seems more majestic, more respectable, more divine: the miracles of Jesus Christ then acquired, by a long series of years and by the great number of the faithful, a splendor which does not allow let it be called into question: we imagine that all the events happened in the manner that the sacred writers tell it. But let us go back to the origin of this absurd religion, you see a handful of abject men, who try by their fanaticism to pull themselves out of obscurity; they do not succeed, they are still unknown to their compatriots. If you look for the Messiah himself among the Jews, you will not find him there.

So what is left for Christians to support them in their faith? They only have the testimony of a small number of men who then appeared convinced of the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and who tried to persuade others of it. Now, was this small number of men credible on the things he published? This is where the whole question comes down. We see on one side a handful of obscure Jews and barely known to their brothers who advance facts against which reason revolts and who maintain that these facts happened in their country with brilliance and in the sight of their whole nation : on the other side we see all the reasonable men of the earth who treat the Jewish nation with the utmost contempt, who regard Judea and Judaism as the abode of the School of fanaticism. But there is more ,we see the Jewish people even side with the most reasonable party, and regard as so many visionaries this handful of men rising in its midst. Here are the first Christians disowned by their own brothers, here they are despised by the Jews themselves; the always fanatical people are reasonable in comparison with them; their contemporaries deny all the facts they publish; we demonstrate to them its falsity, we make them see its absurdity: it is true that we do not convince them; the disciples of Jesus Christ do not pride themselves on knowledge, they leave their reasoning to the children of the century, we see them persist in their opinions, they are ready if we want to seal them with their blood; but do not expect from them other reasons or other proofs of the facts which they advance than their faith and their stubbornness.

These were the first followers of the Messiah; it is to their testimony alone that we are obliged to rely on his miracles and on his resurrection; as if Jesus Christ had only come into the world for the salvation of a small number of the Elect. It seems that he wanted to spend his life among his disciples without deigning to make himself known to the rest of men. Even his nation did not know him, he performed all his miracles in Judea, but it seems that his disciples alone were witnesses of it, as they were in fact the only witnesses of his resurrection. It was apparently not easy to persuade the Jews that he who during his lifetime had done so many wonders, of which they had seen nothing, was resurrected after his death. One single appearance of Jesus Christ to the Pharisees, to doctors of the Law, to enlightened men, to the people themselves,doubtless would have made more impression on the minds of unbelievers than all the assurances given by his disciples that they had seen him resurrected. This is what Celsus once said, one of the great enemies of the Christian religion, and Origen can only respond to such solid reasoning by resorting to mystery.

It seems that Jesus Christ was the enemy of the splendor, both in the miracles of his life and in that of his resurrection. If the Demon, forced by his word to abandon a possessed person, declares that he is Christ the son of the living God, he immediately imposes silence on him. If he confesses in secret to his disciples that he is the Messiah, he orders them at the same time not to divulge this great truth. If he heals a leper, if he gives sight to a blind man, he especially recommends them not to publish this miracle. He used it thus, says St. Matthew, so that this word of Isaiah might be fulfilled: my Servant is discreet, peaceful, his voice will not be heard in public places, he will not cry, he will not burst out. . In truth, the Gospels often make the Messiah perform very brilliant miracles,but it is for the fulfillment of some other quite contrary prophecy. Be that as it may, the precautions that Jesus Christ took to stifle the brilliance of his miracles, to hide his wonderful life and his resurrection, to make himself unknown to the very men among whom he lived, these precautions, say -I, are convincing proof that he wanted to owe the establishment of his religion to faith alone.

We could have given here several explanations on what concerns miracles, possessions, exorcisms, etc. but all these things are only circumstances and dependencies of the fact to which only one wanted to be attached. Let's move on to the evangelical dogma. As the dogmatics of the Gospel depend absolutely on the history and the fact being vanished the dogmas also vanish, it seems rather useless to go into this subject in great detail. Christians who are convinced of the miracles and resurrection of Jesus Christ respect and worship all his words: unbelievers who stop only at the fact care little whether the morality of the Messiah contains some useful precepts or that his reasoning is fair.So too exact a discussion would seem superfluous to some and would not shake the credulity or the faith of others. It is nevertheless appropriate to say something about it, in order to make more complete the idea that one must form of the head of the Christian religion, and the little that we are going to say about it will have even with the fact enough report to do not separate it. Under dogma we understand dogma, morality and the other words of Jesus Christ that are found in the Gospel. The dogmas are faith in Jesus Christ, baptism, the approaching end of the world, the last judgment, finally the incarnation of the Word and the divinity of Jesus Christ announced in the Gospel of St. John. We have more than once examined these dogmas, it would be useless to discuss them here.Morality demands that we dwell on it more because it has been less examined with the eyes of criticism.

It is an opinion which we do not doubt in Christianity, that evangelical morality is the first of all morals, and that its principal maxims were unknown to all men who lived before Jesus Christ. The prejudice that Christians have for their religion and the respect they have for their divine teacher naturally lead them to think in this way. They would have too much trouble seeing a Man-God sharing with other men the glory of having taught good morals, and they could not believe that under the empire of the Devil he could have found virtue.

This prevention nevertheless depends on a fact even easier to clarify than that of the miracles of Jesus Christ. All that is needed is to cast our eyes on one of the moral works which remain to us from antiquity. But Christians are mostly ignorant or blinded by their prejudices; the ignorant read nothing, and the rest do not see what is before their eyes. They are really such as the evangelists represent the Jews, they look and do not see: those of whom we speak have a hundred times encountered in the writings of the pagans a great number of maxims entirely in conformity with the evangelical maxims. But they did not care, or if these maxims are so clearly stated there that they cannot help but be struck by them,there is no torture that they do not give to their mind to find in it a meaning which they do not have.

We will not undertake to open our eyes to the blind, it is a miracle reserved for the Messiah. For those who are tempted to know more in depth the conformity which is between evangelical morality and that of the pagans, they will be able to learn about it in a work which has been done on this; they will see in it charity, forgetting insults, love of enemies, humility, in a word all the maxims of Christian morality as clearly and as strongly recommended as in the Gospel. They will even notice there not only a perfect conformity as to the meaning and the substance of things, but also as to the turns and expressions. We refer them to this work that it is not appropriate to copy here a second time. The Jews were not very literate. Jesus Christ who explained Isaiah's prophecy so well in the synagogue of Nazareth,does not seem more versed in reading foreign books than his compatriots. We are not astonished that he had a bad opinion of the morality of the pagans, it was unknown to him; but it is astonishing that the morality known and so practiced by a large number of Sages his contemporaries appeared to him so new, since for two or three centuries the commerce of the Greeks had introduced their philosophy among the Jews, and had made them know maxims of morality of which Moses had given no idea to their savage ancestors; it is a fact of which it is easy to be convinced; the numerous sect of the Essenes which subsisted two hundred years before Jesus Christ, had embraced Pythagoreanism and had adopted the Greek maxims on the regulation of morals; the moral that is found in the works of Joseph,is the same that all honest people followed among the Jews, and it is that of the Gospel. One has only to read the book of Laws in which Philo gives an explanation of the commandments of God, to find there the purest and most healthy morality; to recognize in a word that of Christians.

Why then does the Messiah always parallel the raw morality of the ancients with his own, as if the latter would immediately take the place of the other? Why does he constantly announce as news maxims which must have already been very old and very hackneyed for a large number of Jews? The unbelievers will perhaps respond to this that Jesus Christ was not speaking to the enlightened men of his nation who never heard him speak, who never knew him, but spoke to his disciples and to those who followed him, that is to say to men so rude and ignorant that everything must have seemed new to them.

There is nothing more expressly recommended in the Gospel than the forgetting of insults and the love of one's enemies; these maxims, so little in conformity with the nature of man and consequently so useless, are constantly repeated there; but the more often we meet them, the more we are shocked at the contrary they do with the continual invectives of the Messiah against the Pharisees. No doubt Jesus Christ wanted only their pride and their vices; he deeply cherished their persons and regarded them as stray sheep whose conversion he wished: we believe him, but nevertheless he never wanted to do any miracle in their presence, some prayers that they made him of it he did not never deigned to explain to them his doctrine nor to clearly announce to them the kingdom of heaven; he never spoke to them gently,and he never uttered their name except with some of those insulting epithets of wicked, hypocrites, whitewashed sepulchres, of adulterous race, children of the Devil; this conduct, if judged by the lights of reason, would appear to contradict the Messiah's own words and the gentleness attributed to him.

The laymen, to whom the perfect charity of Jesus Christ for the Pharisees seems ambiguous, assure that we can apply to him on this occasion what he himself applied to his whitewashed sepulchres: do what they say and do not do what they do . The faithful worship in all this the mysterious conduct of the Savior, and their reverent faith will always prevent them from suspecting any gall in the Lamb which takes away the sins of the world.

As the Pharisees had been the main driving force behind the death of Jesus Christ, and since not content with this they persecuted those who had embraced his doctrine, it is not surprising to see them treated so badly in the Gospels. The Christians who published these stories were doubly animated against them and by the death of their master and by the persecutions they suffered from it themselves.

Among the moral discourses of the Messiah, the evangelists still relate some of his words in small numbers, which are either prophecies or simple reasoning; it only remains for us to say a word about each other.

Jesus Christ foretold his death and resurrection many times: he foretold the betrayal of Judas, the denial of St. Peter and the kind of death that was to complete the end of this apostle. He prophetically announced the coming end of the world; he declared that the life of some of his disciples would last until his advent, and he assured him in particular of St. John his beloved disciple; finally, he clearly predicted the desolation of Jerusalem and the ruin of the temple: a fatal event which, he said, was to immediately precede the end of the world and the universal judgment.

We know that many of these prophecies were fulfilled before the publication of the Gospels, such as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the crucifixion of St. Peter. But the commentators do not want to agree that the one who looks at the destruction of Jerusalem still had its fulfillment; in truth, most of all these proofs fail them to support them in their opinion, instead of having such a strong probability against them, that it will always pass for a certainty among men who do not submit their reason to a blind faith; it is the clear and almost historical way in which this terrible event is announced in the Gospel, without counting neither St. Paul nor the other apostles who wrote before the ruin of Jerusalem never mentioned any history. evangelical which would have appeared in their time.As for the end of the world that the first Christians believed should follow immediately after the ruin of the Holy City, it is an indisputable fact which it is easy to convince by reading the Epistles of the apostles themselves.

It is less by the force of reasoning, than by the brilliance of his miracles and by the sublimity of his doctrine, that the Messiah was to attract men. The evangelists who make Jesus Christ do countless wonders, who put in his mouth an infinity of parables and moral discourses, hardly ever make him reason; still some critics claim that the sacred historians have not been on this as reserved as they should have been: Jesus Christ, say the laymen, had to stick to miracles and parables, his actions and his morals persuaded enough; a God like him could neglect human reasoning; with such conduct one might perhaps have believed him superior to reason itself, he should at least carefully avoid ever reasoning wrong;why does he give us a hold on him? His miracles made us lose sight of him, his reasoning put him back within our reach; in the very little that he makes of it we find almost no accuracy. Is it then easier to restore sight to the blind and raise the dead than to reason correctly? Let us content ourselves with reporting several arguments of Jesus Christ which appear to lack solidity.

The first that presents itself is the curse that the Messiah gives to the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law in these terms (23): "woe to you, scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, because you are rebuilding the tombs of the prophets and embellishing the monuments of the good people; and that you say: If we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have joined with them in shedding the blood of the prophets. So you testify to yourselves that you are the seed of those who killed the prophets. The Pharisees undoubtedly believed to disavow the violence of their fathers, to repair their fault in some way and to restore in honor the memory of the prophets by erecting them tombs. We would still think in the same way today, however Jesus Christ assures us that we would be wrong.It must be admitted that the doctors and the Pharisees did not find in the Messiah much disposition to approve their conduct in what it even seemed to have most regular.

The enemies of Jesus Christ will apparently not believe themselves convinced by this reasoning; but here are some others to which they will not know what to answer: let us see if they will appear more solid. The Messiah (24) having asked the Pharisees if Christ should be the son of David, and the latter having replied that he was, he added: “David however speaks thus in his psalms. The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I have made your enemies the footstool of your feet. So if David calls him Lord, how should he be his son as you claim? To this, say the evangelists, the Pharisees remained unanswered and confused, to the point that since that day no one dared to ask him any questions. The children of Jews and Christians know more today than these teachers of the Gospel; such an argument would not have embarrassed them. “What, they would have said to Jesus Christ! do you not know that the Psalm of which you speak was made on the occasion of Solomon, when David installed him during his lifetime in the throne of Judea to the detriment of Adonias and his other brothers? Could the author of this Psalm, which was the subject of David and Solomon, explain himself otherwise by speaking of his kings? Moreover, Solomon and David are also treated as lords in the words you quote:the very power in it is mainly attributed to David, since it is he who must subdue the enemies of his son. What do you claim to conclude from this in favor of Christ? To this answer the Messiah could have been silenced himself.

When we find in Scripture that God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the first and only thought that comes to mind is that these words mean that God is the God whom these patriarchs once served and worshiped; However, Jesus Christ made it clear on one occasion that this is not the true meaning of these words, and he confused the Sadducees, it is said, by the force of his reasoning. These wanting to tempt the Messiah said to him (25) one day: “Master! seven brothers died among us who had married the same woman one after another as Moses commanded. Now we would like to know which of these seven brothers this woman will have for a husband on the day of the resurrection, because all of them had her.The Messiah answered them first that men after the resurrection would not marry and that they would be like the angels of God; he had to stop there. But he added: you are in error not to believe that the dead must be resuscitated, because finally the Scripture tells us clearly: do you not see that God is called there the God of Abraham, of Isaac and from Jacob? Now God, as you know, is not the God of the dead, but of the living, so you are wrong not to believe in the resurrection. You don't have to be a very subtle logician to sense the fallacy of this argument; however the Sadducees had nothing to say about it. A doctor of the Law who was present could not even help applauding the Messiah in these terms: you have spoken very correctly; and all the people, says the gospel, admired the depth of his doctrine.

It is not surprising that Christians were once scandalized by the adulterous woman to the point of disavowing this story and wanting to erase it from the Gospel of St. John. We are not shocked by the gentleness and goodness that the Messiah shows towards a criminal who according to Judaic laws deserved death; on the contrary, his goodness touches and edifies. Nothing suits God better than mercy, but there is a way of exercising it, and it is not at the expense of maintaining the laws that God must forgive sinners; the rights of men have nothing in common with the rights of God: To maintain order in civil societies, men must punish crimes; God can have mercy on sinners when it pleases him; now it seems that the Messiah confused things on this occasion:The Pharisees having brought to him a woman who had just been caught in adultery, and who therefore deserved to be stoned, he said to them (26):may he who is without sin among you throw the first stone at him . At these words they all went away one after the other, and the woman being left alone, he sent her away, telling her not to sin in the future. Isn't that introducing disorder into societies to put judges out of the power to condemn criminals, for the reason that they are sinners as well as they are? as if the sins which make men guilty in the sight of God were of the same species as those which make them criminal towards society.

Our critics perhaps push a little too far the correctness and the precision which they ask for in the words of the Messiah: they find for example that this prophetic comparison so often repeated in the Gospel is not exact: as Jonah is remained three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, all the same the son of man remained three days and three nights in the bosom of the earth, Jesus Christ, they say, died on Friday at noon and he was resuscitated on Sunday at the break of day. By what supposition, by what stretch of the imagination can we find three days and three nights in a space of 37 or 40 hours? They are surprised that the Messiah, sometimes going out of his ordinary simplicity, has recourse to subtleties so as not to directly answer the questions put to him, such as, for example,when the Pharisees having asked him on what was founded the power which he attributed to himself to teach the people, he evaded this question by another embarrassing question which he asked them about the baptism of St. John, to which his enemies did not know what to answer. Such subtleties seem to suit a sophist rather than the gravity of a Man-God. Without stopping to stop at other quibbles that the unbelievers can make on the way in which the evangelists make reason the Messiah, let us finish by that of all the reasoning which seems to them the least fair or at least the most contradictory.to which his enemies did not know what to answer. Such subtleties seem to suit a sophist rather than the gravity of a Man-God. Without stopping to stop at other quibbles that the unbelievers can make on the way in which the evangelists make reason the Messiah, let us finish by that of all the reasoning which seems to them the least fair or at least the most contradictory.to which his enemies did not know what to answer. Such subtleties seem to suit a sophist rather than the gravity of a Man-God. Without stopping to stop at other quibbles that the unbelievers can make on the way in which the evangelists make reason the Messiah, let us finish by that of all the reasoning which seems to them the least fair or at least the most contradictory.

One cannot doubt that St. John had the design to establish the Divinity of Jesus Christ in his Gospel, he loses no occasion in the continuation of supporting this dogma, he even often gives birth to it; we feel that this is his main view, or, to put it better, we see that it is his real object: who would believe, however, that this evangelist provides one of the strongest arguments that can be made against the favorite dogma he wants to establish? St. John overturns with a single word the whole edifice he has built and it is in the mouth of the Messiah himself that he puts this word so prejudicial to his Divinity; here are the proper terms of the Gospel.

“The Jews around Jesus Christ told him (27) how long will you hold our minds in suspense? If you are Christ tell us openly. He said to them, I told you, but you do not believe me; yet the works that I do in my Father's name bear witness of me. My Father and I are the same; then the Jews took stones to stone him; but Jesus Christ said to them, I have done many good works in your presence by virtue of my Father, for which of these good works do you stone me? The Jews answered him: It is not for a good work that we stone you, but for a blasphemy, and because being man you make yourselves God. Jesus distributes them: is it not written in your law,I said you are Gods? Now if those to whom this word is addressed are called Gods by the very Scripture who cannot go astray, how can you say that he whom the Father has sanctioned and sent into the world, blasphemy, because he 'he said: I am the son of God? "

To feel the disadvantageous consequence to the Divinity of Jesus Christ, which one can draw from these words of the Gospel, it was only necessary to relate them, they are so clear, so formal and therefore so embarrassing for the commentators. that they are obliged to explain the Gospel in this place by itself, that is to say, that they are obliged to have recourse to other places of the Gospel where St. John positively says the contrary to what he seems to be saying here. But the difficulty still remains in its entirety; the efforts of the commentators do not lift it. All that can be concluded more favorable for the Divinity of Jesus Christ is that St. John having established this dogma elsewhere, he here denies his system by a false reasoning, which he makes the Messiah do.

We agree that Jesus Christ often said that he was equal with God, that he was the same with his Father, that he was God: he said it so clearly that the Jews were not mistaken, they took his words literally; they wanted to stone him because of the blasphemy they seemed to contain; and it is on this that Jesus Christ undertakes to justify himself by the explanation which he himself gives to his words with which the Jews were scandalized: you are treating me, he said to them, as a blasphemer because I have said I was God? What! if the rulers and judges of the people are called Gods in Scripture, may I not take this quality,I whom the Father has sanctified and sent to the world? There is no one who does not feel that this reasoning is wrong in that Jesus Christ places himself in the same rank as the judges and the magistrates, although in a degree superior to them. Now judges and magistrates are incorrectly called Gods in Scripture, consequently Jesus Christ makes it understood that it is also improperly that he takes the quality of God. For after all, although he believes himself to be better justified in taking this quality than those to whom Scripture attributes it, this difference is only more or less, and always leaves Jesus Christ in the same genre as those to whom he compares. At least this is the only way in which a somewhat exact logic allows these words to be explained.Now judges and magistrates are incorrectly called Gods in Scripture, consequently Jesus Christ makes it understood that it is also improperly that he takes the quality of God. For, after all, although he believes himself to be better justified in taking this quality than those to whom Scripture attributes it, this difference is only more or less, and always leaves Jesus Christ in the same genre as those to whom he compares. At least this is the only way in which a somewhat exact logic allows these words to be explained.Now judges and magistrates are incorrectly called Gods in Scripture, consequently Jesus Christ makes it understood that it is also improperly that he takes the quality of God. For after all, although he believes himself to be better justified in taking this quality than those to whom Scripture attributes it, this difference is only more or less, and always leaves Jesus Christ in the same genre as those to whom he compares. At least this is the only way in which a somewhat exact logic allows these words to be explained.and always leaves Jesus Christ in the same gender as those to whom he compares himself. At least that is the only way in which a somewhat exact logic allows these words to be explained.and always leaves Jesus Christ in the same gender as those to whom he compares himself. At least that is the only way in which a somewhat exact logic allows these words to be explained.

It must be admitted after all that it was not the intention of the evangelist that they should be understood in this sense; he has declared himself too clearly elsewhere to be suspected. Saint John believed to put in the mouth of the Messiah a subtle argument which would confound his enemies, and he makes him make an insulting reasoning to his Divinity in the place of the Gospel where it was more appropriate to establish this dogma of an indisputable way; that is, at the time when the Jews urge Jesus Christ not to hold them in suspense and to clearly declare to them who he is.

He tells them the truth that he is God, but at the same time he gives an explanation which overturns the idea, and which simply tends to make him look like a man whom God wanted to distinguish from the rest of men.

If the historians of Jesus Christ had been better logicians, the reasonings which they made him make would appear more consistent and more conclusive; but the first Christians who composed the Gospels were not subtle reasoners: these simple men, possessed of the love of the marvelous, thought only of filling their stories with it, they made their master act in accordance with the taste which dominated them, and moreover they made him reason as if they were reasoning themselves. The disciples of the Messiah were poor, they honored poverty in the Gospel; they were persecuted, they promised the kingdom of heaven to those who suffered persecution; they had a lively faith for dogmas and for incredible facts, they recommended over all things the simplicity of the spirit.This simplicity is necessary for the faithful not only to believe the miracles of Jesus Christ and to embrace his dogmas, but it is still necessary for them to be able to enter into his reasoning. We will never be among his disciples if we do not become like children, only their like will share in the kingdom of his Father; like them, one must be simple and docile, make the same use of reason as they do of it. What we have just reported from the reasoning of the Messiah, shows that he himself gave the example of this simplicity which he recommended so much.only their like will share in his Father's kingdom; like them, one must be simple and docile, make the same use of reason as they do of it. What we have just reported from the reasoning of the Messiah, shows that he himself gave the example of this simplicity which he recommended so much.only their like will share in his Father's kingdom; like them, one must be simple and docile, make the same use of reason as they do of it. What we have just reported from the reasoning of the Messiah, shows that he himself gave the example of this simplicity which he recommended so much.

Jean-Baptiste de Mirabaud, Impartial Reflections on the Gospel , London, 1769.

(1) Quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem, quæ in nobis completæ sunt, rerum: sicut tradiderunt nobis, qui ab initio ipsi viderunt, and Ministri fuerunt lermonis: vitum est & mihi, assecuto omnia à principio diligenter, ex ordine tibi scriber, optime Theophile, ut cognoscas corum verborum, from quibus cruditus es, veritatem. Luc. Cap I. verse. 1. & seqq.

(2) Some madmen of the early Church, who were called Cainites, because they regarded Cain as a great personage as well as Esau, Korah and the Sodomites, used the Gospel of Judas which was according to them the first of the apostles.

(3) They believed that Eve was very enlightened, and that she had learned very beautiful things from the Lord. It is from their extravagant ideas that an author took what he had printed in this last time on original sin. The Gnostics also had other Gospels under the name Disciples of Jesus Christ, and books which they attributed to Adam and Seth.

(4) These Gospels are perhaps not less antiquated for this reason, the ancients not having ordinarily made an exact enumeration of all those which existed in their time; like, for example, St. Jerome who after having named adds a large number that it would take too long to relate: quas anumerare longïssimum est .

(5) We have two of these Childhood Gospels, one Greek translated into Latin, the other translated from Arabic by Mr. Sick. But undoubtedly the original was also Greek, since St. Irenaeus L. 1. Cap. 2, quotes facts which are only found in the latter; it is longer and more extensive than the other.

(6) The author of the imperfect work on St. Matthew speaks of the Proto-Gospel of St. James as a reasonable work which is not unworthy of him. These are his terms.

(7) Matthew I. 17.

(8) Cap. 2. verse 15.

(9) Matthew II. 23.

(10) Marcus videtur Mattheum subsequi, quasi pedissequus ejus, & abbreviator. August. of cons. Evangel. Lib. I. Cap. I. “It seems,” said Bernard, “that St. Mark had seen the Gospel according to St. Matthew, when he composed his, and that St. Luke had seen them both, or that at least he had heard about them: unless we want to say that in the preface to his Gospel he has regard to some other Stories of Jesus Christ that had appeared. New. Of the Republiq. Letters. August 1708. pag. 133. Tom. 44.

(11) Non poterat hic, qui aperuit oculo Cœci nati, sacere ut hic non moreretur! Johan. Cap. XI. verse 37.

(12) Dominate, jam fetet, quatridianus is enim. Johan. XI. 39.

(13) Quia hic homo multa signa facit: Si dimittimus eum, sic omnes credent in eum. Johan. XI. 48.

(14) Change of water into wine at the wedding feast. Jeans. Chap. 2. verse 1. and seqq. The Church celebrates this miracle with a special Commemoration on January 6.

(15) Sunt autem & alia multa, quæ fecit Jesus: quæ si scribantur per singula, nec ipsum arbitror mundum capere posse eos qui scribendi sunt libros. Johan. Cap. Ultim.

(16) Annal. Lib. 15. Cap. 44.

(17) Matthew Cap. XIII. 54 & seqq. Confer . Marc. Cap. VI. 2. & seqq.

(18) See Marc Cap. VI. 5. 6.

(19) Matthew XIII. 14. 15.

(20) Empty Matthæum Cap. XIV. verse 3 and 4. And Mark. Cap. VI. 4. 17. 18.

(21) See all this romantic story told at length in St. Marc Cap. VI. verse 21 et seq.

(22) Matthew Cap. II. verse I. et seq.

(23) Væ vobis Scribæ, & Pharisæi hypocritæ qui edificatis sepulchra prophetarum, & ornatis monumenta justorum, & dicitis: si suissemes in diebus patrum nostrorum, non essemus socii eorum in sanguine prophetarum, itaque testimonio estis vobumis who prophetis estis, occiderunt. Matt. XXIII. 29 & seqq.

(24) Interrogavit eos Jesus, dicens: quid vobis videtur de Christo? Cujus filius is? Dicunt ei David. Ait illis: quomodo ergo David in spiritu vocat eum dominum, dicens: dixit dominus domino meo, sede to dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum? Si ergo David vocat eum dominum, quomodo filius ejus est? & nemo poterat ei respondere verbum: neque ausus fuit quisquam ex illa die eum amplius interrogare. Matth. Cap. XXII. verse 41 & seqq.

(25) Vid. Matth. XXII. verse 23 & seqq. Confer. Marc. Cap. XII verse 18 & seqq.

(26) John VIII. 7 & seqq.

(27) John X. 24 & seqq.