

speaking these things to his father.

2 And he was much surprised, that being a child, he should speak such things; and after a few days he came to Joseph, and said,

3 Thou hast a wise and sensible child, send him to me, that he may learn to read.

4 When he sat down to teach the letters to Jesus, he began with the first letter Aleph;

5 But Jesus pronounced the second letter Mpeth (Beth) Cghimel (Gimel), and said over all the letters to him to the end.

6 Then opening a book, he taught his master the prophets: but he was ashamed, and was at a loss to conceive how he came to know the letters.

7 And he arose and went home, wonderfully surprised at so strange a thing.

CHAP. IV.

1 *Fragment of an adventure at a dyer's.*

AS Jesus was passing by a certain shop, he saw a young man dipping (or dyeing) some cloths and stockings in a furnace, of a sad colour, doing them according to every person's particular order;

2 The boy Jesus going to the young man who was doing this, took also some of the cloths.

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¶ *Here endeth the Fragment of Thomas's Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ*

THE EPISTLES of JESUS CHRIST and ABGARUS KING of EDESSA.

[The first writer who makes any mention of the Epistles that passed between Jesus Christ and Abgarus, is Eusebius, Bishop of Cesarea, in Palestine, who flourished in the early part of the fourth century. For their genuineness, he appeals to the public registers and records of the City of Edessa in Mesopotamia, where Abgarus reigned, and where he affirms that he found them written, in the Syriac language. He published a Greek translation of them, in his Ecclesiastical History.¹ The learned world have been much divided on this subject; but, notwithstanding that the erudite Grabe, with Archbishop Cave, Dr. Parker, and other divines, has strenuously contended for their admission into the canon of Scripture, they are deemed apocryphal. The Rev. Jeremiah Jones observes, that the common people in England have this Epistle in their houses, in many places, fixed in a frame, with the picture of Christ before it; and that they generally, with much honesty and devotion, regard it as the word of God, and the genuine Epistle of Christ.]

CHAP. I.

A copy of a letter written by King Abgarus to Jesus, and sent to him by Ananias, his footman, to Jerusalem, 5 inviting him to Edessa.

ABGARUS, king of Edessa, to Jesus the good Saviour, who appears at Jerusalem, greeting.

2 I have been informed concerning you and your cures, which are performed without the use of medicines and herba.

3 For it is reported, that you cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, do both cleanse lepers, and cast out unclean spirits and devils, and restore them to health

¹ L. i. c. 13.

who have been long diseased, and raisest up the dead;

4 All which when I heard, I was persuaded of one of these two, viz: either that you are God himself descended from heaven, who do these things, or the son of God.

5 On this account therefore I have wrote to you, earnestly to desire you would take the trouble of a journey hither, and cure a disease which I am under.

6 For I hear the Jews ridicule you, and intend you mischief.

7 My city is indeed small, but neat, and large enough for us both.

CHAP. II.

The answer of Jesus by means of the footman to Abgarus the king, 3 declining to visit Edessa.

ABGARUS, you are happy, forasmuch as you have believed on me, whom ye have not seen.

2 For it is written concerning me, that those who have seen me should not believe on me, that they who have not seen might believe and live.

3 As to that part of your letter, which relates to my giving you a visit, I must inform you, that I must fulfil all the ends of my mission in this country, and after that be received up again to him who sent me.

4 But after my ascension I will send one of my disciples, who will cure your disease, and give life to you, and all that are with you.

The GOSPEL of NICODEMUS, formerly called the ACTS of PONTIUS PILATE.

[Although this Gospel is, by some among the learned, supposed to have been really written by Nicodemus, who became a disciple of Jesus Christ, and conversed with him; others conjecture that it was a forgery towards the close of the third century by some zealous believer, who observing that there had been appeals made by the Christians of the former age, to the Acts of Pilate, but that such Acts could not be produced, imagined it would be of service to Christianity to fabricate and publish this Gospel; as it would both confirm the Christians under persecution, and convince the Heathens of the truth of the Christian religion. The Rev. Jeremiah Jones says, that such pious frauds were very common among Christians even in the first three centuries; and that a forgery of this nature, with the view above mentioned, seems natural and probable. The same author, in noticing that Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical history, charges the Pagans with having forged and published a book, called "The Acts of Pilate," takes occasion to observe, that the internal evidence of this Gospel shows it was not the work of any Heathen; but that if in the latter end of the third century we find it in use among Christians (as it was then certainly in some churches) and about the same time find a forgery of the Heathens under the same title, it seems exceedingly probable that some Christians, at that time, should publish such a piece as this, in order partly to confront the spurious one of the Pagans, and partly to support those appeals which had been made by former Christians to the Acts of Pilate; and Mr. Jones says, he thinks so more particularly as we have innumerable instances of forgeries by the faithful in the primitive ages, grounded on less plausible reasons. Whether it be canonical or not, it is of very great antiquity, and is appealed to by several of the ancient Christians. The present translation is made from the Gospel published by Grynæus in the *Orthodoxographia*, vol. i. tom. ii. p. 643.]