

**A LETTER TO THE REV. S.R.
MAITLAND
ON THE OPINIONS
OF THE PAULICIANS**

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A letter to the rev. S.R. Maitland on the opinions of the Paulicians by Samuel Roffey Maitland
& John Goulter Dowling

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SAMUEL ROFFEY MAITLAND & JOHN GOULTER DOWLING

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A
LETTER
TO
THE REV. S. R. MAITLAND,
ON
THE OPINIONS
OF
THE PAULICIANS.

BY
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Quin potius memores scimus tam Dominicarum prænotiationum, quam Apostolicarum litterarum, quæ nobis et futuras hæreses prænotiarunt, et fugiendas præfulerunt: et sicut esse illas non expavescimus, ita posse id propter quod fugiendæ sunt, non miremur.

Tertullian. de Præscript. Hæreticorum, IV.

LONDON,
FOR J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON;
J. H. PARKER, OXFORD; J. AND J. J. DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE;
J. E. LEA, AND T. JEW, GLOUCESTER;
W. STRONG, BRISTOL AND EXETER.

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515.



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A LETTER, &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

A CONSCIOUSNESS of our faults is the first stage in the progress towards amendment. It is therefore a very satisfactory symptom to hear from so many different quarters, a full confession of the degraded state of ecclesiastical learning among us. But never certainly was there more substantial ground of complaint. Never, among an intelligent and inquiring people, had an useful and interesting branch of study fallen into more complete neglect. During the last century the cultivation of church history may fairly be said to have been abandoned. We are, I trust, fallen upon a time which will see it resumed with new zeal and vigour.

But to whatever extent ecclesiastical studies are destined again to advance among us, we may certainly boast of having witnessed the foundation of a new English school of church history. It is unnecessary, and it might be invidious, to particularize the labourers. Your station in the number is, however, my dear Sir, by this time ascertained and recognised. The "Facts and Documents" stand in the very highest class of the recent contributions to our knowledge in the province of fact. It is not a

small thing to have cleared at a stroke a field which had been encumbered by the officious industry of the disputants of two centuries. There is now an end of the controversy about the Albigenses. Men of real learning had, it is true, never much doubt about the matter. An acquaintance with one-tenth of the authorities which you have collected, was sufficient to convince the fair inquirer that the Albigenses held Manichæan tenets, and that the Waldenses were a distinct and a recent sect. But it needs not learning to get at the truth *now*. It needs but honesty and plain sense, and the pains of reading your interesting book. That book *must* have its effect, and it seems scarcely possible but that in a very short time you will see Protestantism relieved, by your exertions, of one of its most crying scandals—the attempt to maintain a position which the learned Romanist *knew* to be untenable.

In clearing away the rubbish which a perverse ingenuity and well meaning ignorance had heaped on the field of your labours, you found it necessary to estimate the value of Milner's "History of the Church of Christ^a," and to notice the strange

^a The writer of these remarks does not wish them to be considered as put together with reference to the recent controversy about the literary value of Milner's History. That question has surely been quite decided by Mr. Maitland's "Notes." *Τίς ἀλεῖ τὸν θάβον ἐπισκευαίς*; But every one who has the least regard for truth and learning is bound to protest against the attempt to deposit Milner's book in a sanctuary which it shall be sacrilege to violate. A work of forty years standing is surely a fair subject of criticism. The mortifying part of the affair is that it remained so long uncriticized. The best apology for Milner is afforded by the fact that at the time he wrote, and for many years after, there was no one in this coun-

account which he had given of the Paulicians. And truly the want of information and the want of judgment, which that writer displays in his second chapter on the IXth century, are equally astonishing in one who pretended to write on an ecclesiastical subject, and are, it might be thought, amply sufficient to put the most confiding on their guard against depending on him as a writer of church history,—however sound he may have been as a divine, or excellent as a man.

It might have seemed that a writer who, by his own confession, was absolutely without the means of knowing the real state of the case, and who, when he called the Paulicians “servants of Christ,” and celebrated “the Christian patience and meekness” with which they “underwent the horrors of persecution,” knew nothing about the sect but what he read in the most common English books, could effect nothing but the ruin of his own literary character. Yet in this strange paradox he has had his followers. Not to mention more obscure writers, the author of a well known “Life of Wycliffe^b” has

try who could have written such a history better than he did. The learned writers who have lately exposed his deficiencies and errors, are not the men to enter into a wicked crusade against a man of piety, as some seem to insinuate. And every one who knows any thing about the matter, knows that it was not divines of a particular school merely, who in Milner’s time were unacquainted with the original writers of ecclesiastical history. The ignorance was general.

^b Vaughan’s *Life of Wycliffe*, vol. i. p. 110—122. This writer makes two or three references to *Petrus Siculus*, but as all the same places are cited by Mr. Turner, to whom he also refers, and as his account of the Paulicians is evidently compiled from the English writers, I cannot doubt that the refer-

adopted his opinion—himself equally unacquainted with the original testimonies. And even so able an author as Mr. Turner, though he believes “that the Paulicians had many absurd as well as valuable opinions,” seems to regard them upon the whole as reformers rather than heretics.

It might really be thought, from the language of many of these persons, that there was a deficiency of evidence with regard to the opinions and history of the Paulicians, that we have no means of getting at any thing like an accurate acquaintance with their principles and fortunes, and that in the absence of original testimony we may give ourselves up to the guidance of conjecture. Persons unacquainted with Byzantine literature, would be aston-

ences in question were merely transferred from Mr. Turner's pages—for the sake of *effect*. The unfairness of this way of getting up books, and of seeking by such means as these a reputation for learning, is only to be paralleled by the presumption with which writers who are quite destitute of original information, set up mere conjecture against historical testimony.

Mr. Turner's remarks (*Hist. of England during the Middle Ages*, vol. v. p. 123—126.) are of a much more superficial character than what has usually proceeded from the pen of that valuable writer. It could be only in the most hurried composition that Mr. Turner would be likely to confound the tyrant Justinian II. with Justinian I. the legislator, as he has done on page 125.

But the most extraordinary misrepresentation I have met with on the subject—and I have met with a pretty large quantity—is contained in the “*History of the Waldenses*, by “the Rev. Adam Blair, Edinburgh, 1833.” This writer communicates the startling information, that Petrus Siculus, or as he classically denominates him, Peter Siculus, was “a prejudiced Romanist.” The account he gives of the tenets of the Paulicians is so marvellously distorted, that I shall insert it in a note, when I come to notice the testimony of the Greek writer whom he professes to follow.

ished to be told that there is in existence a very large quantity of original evidence, that there are two or three ancient treatises extant, written by contemporaries expressly on the subject of the Paulicians, that the sect is more or less noticed^c by almost all the historians of the Romans of the East, and that it is referred to by ecclesiastical documents. And yet this is really the case. We know more of the Paulicians than we know of half the sects^d of which mention is made in the annals of philosophy and religion. And I cannot see that our authorities leave us the slightest reason to doubt the general accuracy of the common statements.

Had it been a difficult thing to expose the erroneous views of the writers to whom I refer, I should have ventured to request you to diffuse upon this branch of history the light which every subject you have treated has received from your profound and extensive acquaintance with ecclesiastical learn-

^c Horum Paulicianorum ortum, progressum, successionem, deliris, furorem, facinora descripserunt auctores multi aut saltem commemorarunt.—Cotelerius, in notis ad Nomocanon. cccc. Eccles. Græc. Monument. tom. i. p. 738. Lut. Paris. 1677. And let me here add the words of another learned modern on the subject before us. "At enim vero quis dubitet, historicis "ad tempora hæc propius accedentibus iisque consentientibus "majorem in hoc negotio fidem adhibendam esse, quam Arnoldo "recentiori figmentorum consarcinatori, et conjecturis fallacibus "familiariter utenti?" J. Ch. Wolfi Manichæismus ante Manichæos, cap. lix. p. 247, 248.

^d For instance, the Bogomili, not to mention the early Gnostic sects. Sam. Andræ Disquisitio de Bogomilis; apud Johannis Vogt Bibl. Hist. Hæresiologica, tom. i. p. 124. J. Christoph. Wolfi Historia Bogomilorum.